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Finding a Place in Nation: Autobiography and Embodiment

by

Michèle Mary Gunderson ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2003

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Finding a Place in Nation: Autobiography and Embodiment" submitted by Michèle Mary Gunderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This study shows how embodiment matters in autobiographical constructions of identity produced in the context of a national frame. Through a socially and historically contextualized reading of three Canadian women's autobiographies – Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, and Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* – I show how central experiences of embodiment are in the construction of individual and collective identities framed by discourses of national inclusiveness. Dominant discourses that promote Canada as a tolerant multicultural nation shape notions of identity in ways that often elide complex issues of embodiment. At the same time, embodied experiences and identities may contest such discourses by showing the contradictions in what sometimes appears to be a seamless national fabric, a national identity that is taken to be a model of inclusiveness and diversity. Identities are complicated by the fact that people live in and as bodies. Bodies have the potential to connect people with one another and deeply to divide them, often simultaneously. Underlining the way bodies function as key sites for social inscription, the dissertation suggests that close attention to representations of embodiment in autobiographies shaped by national discourses may call into question dominant understandings of the way individuals and groups in Canada find a place in nation.

Autobiographies locate bodies in culturally and historically specific ways. To examine the complex interrelationships among scripts of self, national identifications, and embodied differences, this project draws on materialist, postcolonial, and feminist theories. Materialist theories allow me to examine how particular representations of embodiment are connected with a complex field of historical and cultural relations. Postcolonial theories underline how notions of selfhood or subjectivity are embedded in inequitable global contexts and in struggles for decolonization. Finally, feminist theories enable me to focus on women's lives while at the same time investigating racial and class differences that shape women's experiences. Examining texts by a Chinese Canadian, white Canadian, and Métis Canadian autobiographer respectively, I show

how ideas of Canada as an inclusive nation fall apart for all three autobiographers, as do the identity tags (such as "Chinese Canadian") through which I refer to them here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the three people with whom I have worked most closely on this project: my co-supervisors Jo-Ann Wallace and Stephen Slemon, and my reader, Heather Zwicker. All three have supported me both personally and professionally, not only through various intellectual labyrinths, but also through the upheavals of my miscarriages and the birth of my daughter. Despite their own demanding schedules, all three have taken the extra steps that many in their position might not take. My thanks to Jo-Ann for guiding me through both the masters' thesis and the Ph.D. dissertation. Her technique of having me read my own work aloud gave me faith in my own voice, helping me listen both to what I had said and to what I still needed to say. Stephen often asked questions that I could not anticipate, but would find, on reflection, to be exactly what I needed to push the argument further. Going beyond the usual role of reader, Heather did the work one would normally expect only of a supervisor, making herself available to engage in the details of this project in intellectually demanding ways. For these efforts, I am truly grateful.

My thanks to Shirley Neuman, who supervised this project in its early stages. Her faith in my work, her intellectual and emotional support, and her expert guidance before she moved to another university helped shape this dissertation in important ways. I was fortunate enough to participate in two reading groups at the University of Alberta, one focusing on Canadian Literature and one on Feminist Theories of the Body. Thanks are due to members of both groups, including Dale Blake, Pippa Brush, Kate Carter, Dan Coleman, Ann Hall, Jane Haslett, Tim Heath, Peggy Kelly, Lisa Laframboise, Victoria Lamont, Jane Magrath, Alan Richards, Linda Warley, and Doris Wolf. Our conversations made me laugh, prompted me to think beyond my comfort zone, and gave me the opportunity to share my ideas with a wonderful group of scholars. I am also grateful to the writers whose works I examine here, Maria Campbell, Denise Chong, and Daphne Marlatt. Through their writings all three have had a profound influence on my life. For editorial suggestions, my thanks to Patricia Clements, Ingrid Johnston, and Jeanne Perreault. Thanks to the helpful staff in the English department at the University of Alberta, particularly Kim Brown, who guided me through the administrative side of this project.

I have had tremendous support from family members who cheered me on through difficult times and participated in this project in numerous ways. Most of all, my parents' obvious pride in my work and their unqualified support always helped me make it through. My husband Rob, a computer engineer, contributed by finding new and better programs, debugging the computer at crucial times, and rigging up a computer for me wherever we happened to be. My thanks to him for making the completion of this project a family priority. My late father-in-law, John Newton, would have been so happy to see the completion of this work, for he was always one of my greatest supporters. I am grateful to the staff at ACE Child Development Centre who took excellent care of my daughter, freeing my mind from worries about her well-being so I could complete this work. Judith Pond and Tim Nethercott helped when I needed them the most; their friendship and their willingness to listen to my latest intellectual and spiritual conundrums were much appreciated. Thanks to Rick Goulet, Marianne Malo-Chenard, and Rob Wiznura, for helping me to believe it is possible to do academic work and raise a child at the same time, and thanks to Vicki Holmes and other special friends who helped in different ways. To my daughter, Dana: thank you for keeping my heart open, for helping me learn to be patient, and for being the wonderful person you are. You are the reason that this work matters. Thank you for being.

Scholarships from the University of Alberta and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada allowed me to pursue this project. I am grateful for their financial support. Travel grants from the University of Alberta also helped me to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION

Imaginary Belonging: Nation, Autobiography, Embodiment

> [A]s a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (125)

> There is no deep natural collectivity of women's bodies which precedes some subsequent arrangement of them through history or biopolitics. If the body is an unsteady mark, scarred in its long decay, then the sexed body too undergoes a similar radical temporality, and more transitory states.
>
> Then what is the attraction of the category of the body at all?
>
> Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?* (106)

To bring together Virginia Woolf and Denise Riley here is to raise the question of the complex interrelationships among scripts of self, national identifications, and embodied differences. For Virginia Woolf, the question of women and nation is relatively straightforward: women do not belong to nations. They have no role in the making of nations. They have been excluded from the concept of nation itself, and so they should stand aside from nation, critiquing nationalist discourses that have nothing to do with the bodies and lives of women. In "Professions for Women," Woolf claims that there is "something about the body" that women have not told (61). To bring Woolf's comments from the different essays together, I might say that for Woolf, women are differently embodied, separate from nation through their embodied difference from men, through their common history of exclusion from the benefits of nation, and through their own disidentification with national concerns. Half a century later, Denise Riley contests one of the fundamental assumptions on which Woolf's comments are based, the assumption of an embodied difference that links women across the many differences which divide them. For Riley, there is no foundational body on which to build the category "woman." There can be no universal uniting of women against country, then, for the particularities of time and place fracture the experience of gender in ways that undercut the notion of a shared experience of anti-citizenship. Indeed, Riley's focus on the particularities of time and place serves as a reminder of the specific national contexts and racial authorizations that partly shape Woolf's articulation of a strong, and strongly gendered, anti-nation stand. Woolf's critique of a male-centred patriotism is partly enabled by her relatively privileged position as a white British woman writing in response to her country's participation in the Second World War, a woman for whom the idea of national affiliation can be seen as anathema because her citizenship would never be thrown into question, whatever other challenges she faced as a result of her gender. She can afford to step aside from nation, in other words, because her white Englishness largely protects her from the more horrible repercussions associated with a lack of "proper" citizenship, such as the violent removal from the land described by Maria Campbell in *Halfbreed* or the decades-long separation from family endured by the central figure's relatives in Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*.[1] But if there is no enduring way that bodies define people, in gendered terms or otherwise, why the body? In other words, why examine the way embodiment shapes scripts of self, community, and nation? What, then, is the attraction of the category of the body, if bodies do not easily unite groups of people, either for or against scripts of nation?

The basic project of this dissertation is to show how embodiment matters in autobiographical constructions of identity produced in the context of a national frame. Through a socially and historically contextualized reading of three Canadian women's autobiographies – Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, and Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* – I show how central experiences of embodiment are in the construction of both individual and collective identities framed by Canadian discourses of national inclusiveness. Dominant national discourses that promote Canada as a tolerant or progressive nation shape notions of identity in ways that often elide complex issues of embodiment. At the same time, embodied experiences and identities may contest dominant national discourses by showing the contradictions and fissures in what sometimes appears to be a unified and seamless national fabric, a national identity that is taken to be a model of inclusiveness and tolerance of diversity. In this dissertation, I assume that bodies are both foundational, in the sense that they are central to understandings of ourselves as gendered, raced, or otherwise marked beings, as Woolf suggests, and socially constructed, as Riley underlines. The bodies we live in deeply shape our understandings of what it means to be human, to feel pain, to struggle, to empathize, to protest, or to work for social change. At the same time, the experience of living in or as a body, the process of connecting or disconnecting notions of selfhood from the body, and the ways of imagining a singular body in relation to the bodies of others, vary widely historically, geographically, and across cultures. My purpose in examining three very different articulations of embodied identities in autobiography is twofold. First, the dissertation works to make certain hegemonic articulations of Canadianness visible by examining the ways in which traces of embodied experiences and identities sometimes exceed and thereby call into question discourses of multiculturalism as well as other dominant discourses of national inclusion. Second, my study works to contest such dominant discourses by examining the ways in which these discourses, along with the institutions and other material relations which support them, sometimes work to expel particular bodies or bodily experiences from view. Both individual and collective identities are complicated by the fact that people live in and as bodies. Bodies have the potential both to connect certain people with one another and deeply to divide them, often simultaneously. Moreover, the experience of embodiment is constructed through the complex interrelation of numerous factors both biological and social, material and discursive, local and global. Underlining the way bodies function as a key sites for social inscription, the dissertation suggests that close attention to representations of embodiment in autobiographies shaped by national discourses may call into question dominant understandings of the way individuals and groups in Canada find a place in nation.

---

[1] It should be acknowledged that Woolf's situation was more complex than my brief sketch here allows. As the wife of a Jewish socialist, Woolf would have been a prime target in the event that the Nazis overtook England. Indeed, in May 1940 Leonard and Virginia Woolf made plans to commit suicide together should Hitler be victorious. See Bell 216-17, Woolf *Writer's* 315, 318.

In this dissertation, I turn to autobiographical writings because contemporary autobiographies often foreground complex issues of individual and collective identity, social marginalization, and embodiment that I seek to examine here. Autobiographies locate bodies in culturally and historically specific ways. In *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note that "life narrative inextricably links memory, subjectivity, and the materiality of the body" (37). According to Smith and Watson, "the narrating body is situated at a nexus of language, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and other specificities, and autobiographical narratives mine this embodied locatedness" (38). As Susanna Egan puts it, in autobiography "[n]ot only the hand that writes but also the body that needs, wants, hurts, inherits, disgusts, and so on, 'figures' in the text" (7). The bodies that figure in such texts are not always socially dominant ones; indeed, autobiography is sometimes imagined as a distinct space where the socially marginalized can speak. Autobiography critic Thomas Couser notes that he was drawn to autobiography precisely because of a sense that, "located on the borders of the literary," autobiography is "particularly accessible to marginalized individuals": "I am wont to quote William Dean Howells to the effect that autobiography is the most democratic province of the republic of letters" (4). While the seemingly equal ground of autobiography likewise may have drawn me to the genre in the first place, it is more the exclusions, elisions, and uneven shapings of bodies and selves in autobiography that interest me here. In *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, Smith and Watson suggest that "[a]utobiography has been employed by many women writers to write themselves into history. Not only feminism but also literary and cultural theory have felt the impact of women's autobiography as a previously unacknowledged mode of making visible formerly invisible subjects" (5). The project Smith and Watson refer to is one of historical and cultural recuperation, a kind of feminist archaeological process in which subjects or identities previously hidden from view are discovered and named. While this dissertation participates in this model of feminist scholarship by examining lives marginalized, in various ways, by dominant discourses of identity and nation in Canada, my major project here is not the recuperation of lost identities. Instead, my project is to underline the impossibility of sustaining or achieving particular identities, the material and discursive costs of seeking acceptable identities, and the limits of dominant discourses of identity to frame the lives of the autobiographers in my study. In other words, I seek to show not so much the achievement of successful selfhood, but rather the difficulty, and sometimes impossibility, of such selves materializing within the framework of dominant discourses of nation in Canada, the costs of achieving a proper self, and the elisions of embodiment necessary for such achievement.

The title of my dissertation is meant to raise questions about what it means to "find a place in nation": who is entitled to do so, what kinds of places are available, what kinds of nations autobiographers imagine themselves within, and so on. The questions raised by the first part of the title can be thought of in terms of the key words "finding," "place," and "nation." *Finding*: Who or what does the finding here? The missing subject points to the problem of agency, for the place the subject finds herself in may not be one of her own choosing. Instead, dominant discourses of national inclusion, such as discourses that construct Canada alternately as a multicultural nation, a racelessness nation, or a progressive nation of equal individuals, suggest only a limited range of places in nation and a limited range of social identities to choose from. Within the contexts of the national discourses that frame her life, the autobiographical "I" in each of the texts I examine takes up such identities only uneasily and unevenly, with numerous bodily experiences left unarticulated, partly articulated, or reshaped in discordant ways. *Place*: What kinds of places are available? In these texts, the autobiographical "I" does not simply find one place, a single, coherent identity, but rather her place is multiply inscribed in discursive and material, geographical and psychic, embodied and disembodied ways. Moreover, the idea of "finding your place" is double-edged. The phrase is sometimes used to suggest that a person has found her niche – an appropriate spot, some relationship to others, an identity or way of being that is somehow fitting. At the same time, "finding your place" can also signify not stepping beyond the prescribed boundaries in order not to disturb the status quo. For the autobiographers in this study, not finding a place can sometimes, but not always, be better than finding one; moreover, there is no one place, no single identity or cultural location, that can completely encompass the complexity of the embodied and relational lives represented in their autobiographies. *Nation*: Is there a single nation these autobiographers imagine themselves within, or do ideas of nation shift, with some notions of nation being more inclusive or more diversified than others? If nation is an "imagined community," as Benedict Anderson attests, who or what has the power to imagine this community? Where are the borders of this community drawn, and who lives on its borderlands? In what ways do embodied lives disrupt the borders of this community? Is it possible to find a place that is *not* in nation, or is it impossible to think beyond nation? The phrase "finding a place in nation," then, is interrogative rather than prescriptive. It does not suggest that finding a comfortable place in nation is always desirable or even possible. At the same time, the title suggests a motif that links the autobiographies in this study: all three texts are engaged, to different degrees, in the process of finding a place in nation, even if this search takes widely different forms and yields quite different results.

If the first part of the dissertation title is largely interrogative, the subtitle, "Autobiography and Embodiment," is not meant to provide a simple answer. One way of (mis)reading this title might be: in order for everyone to find a place in nation, we simply need to include those who have inscribed their lives in embodied ways in newly emerging autobiographical texts. This is not my position in this dissertation. Such a position would suggest that all "we" need to do is endlessly add new subjects to "our" (dominant) picture of nation, and everyone will find a place in nation. Moreover, such a reading would assume that the embodied lives examined here are largely representative of other marginalized Canadians, so that if these selves are included, others will be too. Instead, my dissertation suggests that discourses of Canadian inclusiveness themselves sometimes work to expel particular bodies from nation, making the idea of endlessly adding new subjects a problematic way of imagining either a more inclusive nation or the transformation of nation toward more inclusiveness. Rather than reading the subtitle as a solution, then, I suggest that title and subtitle should be seen in juxtaposition with one another. While the first part of the title may ask, in part, both what kind of selves can materialize and what kind of places might be found within dominant national discourses in Canada, the second part calls for an investigation into texts that work to question the idea that new identities can continually emerge to complete an inclusive picture of Canada. In other words, the dissertation suggests that the daily complexities of embodied living for certain people in Canada, as represented in the autobiographical texts in this study, give the lie to inclusive scripts of nation, to the belief that all can find a place in nation without a radical change in material conditions and oppressive social relations.

In order to discuss further how this embodied challenge to dominant national discourses is articulated in these autobiographies, I will analyze in greater depth here some of the key terms in this dissertation: nation, autobiography, and embodiment. After examining these key terms, I will further describe my methodology, outlining the various ways in which I have drawn on materialist paradigms and feminist and postcolonial scholarship in order to read these autobiographical texts. Finally, I will summarize the chapters that comprise the dissertation. The section on nation which follows will sketch out dominant ideas of Canadianness that the autobiographers in my study engage with, critique, rearticulate, and at times, reinscribe.

Nation

> Most Canadians tend to be very well mannered and polite. They accept people's cultures, faiths and way of life.
>
> \- Rachel Alexander, age thirteen, Edmonton

> It's hard to recognize what a Canadian is because we all come from such different backgrounds and religions. I guess we're known for our accomplishments for being peacemakers and peacekeepers and for treating our elders and those younger than us and everyone with respect.
>
> \- Christina Teixeira, age fifteen, Winnipeg

> I would recognize a Canadian by his or her continued support for Canada. In addition, I would recognize a Canadian by his or her participation in Canada's heritage and cultural events, by support of Canada's hockey teams, by voting for future candidates for Prime Minister of Canada and by giving donations to parks for a better tomorrow. I would recognize a Canadian also by his or her

> volunteering for provincial events and by his or her protecting wildlife and historical buildings. I wear my red Maple Leaf with pride!
>
> - Bobby Danforth, age twelve, Regina

In a recent article entitled "True Patriots," in what they refer to as "a fit of Canada Day fervour," Southam News reporters asked teenagers from across Canada the question, "How do you recognize a Canadian?" ("True" A2). Many of the sixteen published responses refer to notions of diversity, equality, and a sense of belonging: "Canadians, they accept you and you're not left out of anything. They welcome you. Even if you don't have any money, they'll help you," one thirteen-year-old offers, for example. There is a strong sense of "we" in nearly all of the responses – a sense that, even if what Canadianness signifies may be hard to pin down precisely, it definitely refers to a certain something we all share. Many of the responses recirculate some dominant ideas of Canadianness that concern me in this dissertation. The responses quoted above underline the basic tenets of Canadian multiculturalism: that we are a diverse nation; that we come together or are united as a nation precisely because of that diversity; that we honour each other's cultures through recognizing and celebrating our diverse cultural heritages. Just as telling as what these young people include are what they exclude from their vision of Canada. Gendered differences do not seem to exist here, beyond the obligatory "his or her" prevalent in Bobby Danforth's response. Likewise, issues of colonialism and race are equally submerged, so that despite or even because of our differences, we are all, as Canadians, basically the same underneath. In response to a question about which part of Canada she would like to visit, one teenager observes: "I would go to the Far North, to a place like Nunavut, to come more in contact with another part of our culture" ("True" A2). Colonial histories are erased so that each part of Canada simply becomes another manifestation of Canadian culture – from the Calgary Stampede to "French culture" to the "cold" of the "Far North" – and Canadian culture is easily and happily inclusive here ("True" A2). Whenever social hierarchies or painful social struggles are (rarely) hinted at, social divisions are smoothed over through eliding issues of gender, race, and class and imagining social differences simply as further manifestations of the national, further examples of broad and unifying national concerns. Thus poverty is not a pressing social issue, but rather an opportunity to make manifest the Canadian spirit of generosity; British Columbia "symbolizes what Canada is, with its nature and beauty"; Nova Scotians "celebrate [their pasts] a lot"; and so on. The most lengthy response quoted at the beginning of this section is the one the editors chose to showcase by placing it first. In twelve-year-old Bobby Danforth's response, the idea of "true patriotism" rings perhaps most clearly. In Danforth's view, Canadians have "continued support for Canada," a patriotism he sees manifested in a variety of ways: through belief in the workings of Canadian democracy (voting for prime minister), upholding various cultural icons (supporting Canada's hockey teams), recognizing the official significance of the past (protecting historical buildings and participating in heritage events), and having faith in the continual progress of the nation (donating to parks "for a better tomorrow"). In the view of Canada presented here, many dominant ideas of nation, however contradictory they may be, are recirculated, with evidence of cultural differences and social tensions neatly glossed over.

In this dissertation, I examine three dominant discourses of Canada or Canadianness that are recirculated in the teenagers' responses discussed above. First, I examine the idea of Canada as a multicultural nation, a model of diversity and tolerance that other nations might well wish to emulate. A conference on multiculturalism held in Edmonton, Alberta in September 2002 clearly articulates this view of nation in its title: "Canada: Global Model for a Multicultural State." The pamphlet promoting this conference prominently quotes His Highness the Aga Khan from a recent *Globe and Mail* interview on its front page: "Canada is today the most successful pluralist society on the face of our globe. . . That is something unique to Canada. It is an amazing global human asset" (*Canada* n.p.). Second, I look at the notion of Canada as a raceless society. As Constance Backhouse notes in *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*, in Canada there is often a "largely erroneous presumption that our country is primarily 'raceless'" (13). A "sense of 'racelessness,'" Backhouse suggests, "pervades Canadian thought" (ibid). Third, I examine discourses of Canadianness that imagine Canada as a progressive and modern nation, one that has emerged from a less equal past into an ever-improving present and future. In this model of Canada, inequities are something that Canada has left (or will soon leave) behind, so that everyone is (or will soon be) treated as equal individuals. Canada is often imagined, then, in various cultural locations, as a multicultural society, as a progressive and colourful model of diversity and tolerance, or as a society of hybrid individuals, a place where race, class, gender, sexuality, and other differences are so (invisibly) prevalent that they do not seem to matter at all. Such discourses of Canadianness are often quite contradictory, despite their apparent seamlessness. How can a nation that promotes the sharing and tolerance of cultural diversity be, at the same time, a raceless and/or genderless nation? How can Canadian citizens be constructed at once as members of diverse cultural groups and also, in the first instance, as separate, single, non-interdependent individuals? Part of the work of this dissertation will be to show how these dominant discourses work together and sometimes collide in ways that are both enabling and disabling for the autobiographers in my study. In Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, for example, the autobiographical narrator imagines her own children to be moving toward a race-free Canada, a future that her mother and grandmother helped to bring about, and Canada itself is envisioned as a multicultural society whose pioneering ancestors struggled to create a better nation. At the same time, this vision of Canada is constructed only at the cost of expelling a certain "Chineseness" from her family's history. In *The Concubine's Children*, I will argue, the narrator displaces an unwanted Chineseness onto the bodies and lives of her overseas relatives in order for her to make sense of a painful family history, one that can only be untangled at the cost of a terrible bodily expulsion.

I am certainly not the first to challenge dominant constructions of Canada as an inclusive nation that welcomes and celebrates diversity. Indo-Canadian literary critic Arun Mukherjee, for example, underlines that for her and many other non-white men and women, "Canadian is a code word for white" (434). In *Selling Illusions*, Neil Bissoondath, a Canadian novelist born in Trinidad, argues that multicultural policies result in "segregation and exclusivity," making it difficult to interact across lines of race and ethnicity (22). While Bissoondath suggests that the answer to such segregation is to resort to a model of individualism and a virtual erasure of culture and race as important ways of thinking about identities, black Caribbean Canadian poet M. Nourbese Philip presents a very different approach. In *Frontiers*, Philip argues that "multiculturalism, as we know it, has no answers for the problems of racism, or white supremacy – unless it is combined with a clearly articulated policy of anti-racism" (185). In dedicating her book to "Canada, / in the effort of becoming a space / of true true be/longing," Philip underlines the distance between dominant imaginings of Canada and her own experience of it as a place of deep "other[ing]" (n.p., 16). In her recent book *How Should I Read These?*, white Canadian literary critic Helen Hoy discusses how CBC television once interviewed her and others about the nature of Canadian identity. In order to challenge ideas of a fixed, given content for Canadianness, she proposed that Canada be thought of as a conversation. Later on, when her partner, Cherokee-Greek novelist Thomas King, turned and asked for her help to find a word he was searching for during his own interview, she had to admit she was not listening, preoccupied as she was with mulling over her own answers to the questions. The irony of that juxtaposition provides her with a model of Canada very different from the one CBC finally portrayed:

> "Canada is a conversation."
>
> "I'm sorry, I wasn't listening." (10)

Critiques of dominant discourses of Canadianness appear in such diverse areas as legal studies, sociology, geography, social anthropology, ethnic history, and literary studies. Legal scholars such as Carol A. Aylward and Constance Backhouse, for example, have considered the ways in which Canadian laws are not as colour-blind as dominant discourses of Canada suggest: "the prevailing myth in Canada," Aylward writes, "is that we are a country without a history of racism" (12). This is a myth that both Aylward and Backhouse seek to challenge by examining the ways in which ideas of race permeate legal decisions while at the same time, evidence of racial thinking is erased. In *The Chinese in Canada*, Marxist sociologist Peter S. Li argues that what is often perceived as cultural misunderstanding stems from the structural imperatives of a capitalist labour market: "It would take more than a change of public attitude," Li writes, "to bring about a truly multicultural Canada" (x). Sociologist Sherene H. Razack likewise underlines the transposition of inequity into the language of cultural difference, arguing that non-white women in Canada "must often present themselves as culturally different instead of oppressed," as "victims of their own oppressive culture" who "cannot then be seen as subjects" (n.p.). In *Vancouver's Chinatown*, geographer Kay J. Anderson contests dominant multicultural discourses by arguing that the very existence of Vancouver's Chinatown, from early negative stereotyping to its current status as an "ethnic neighbourhood," is the result of cultural domination that continues to exist today. According to social anthropologist Eva Mackey, in Canada "officially endorsed versions of multiculturalism abduct the cultures of minority groups, pressing them into the service of nation building without promoting genuine respect and autonomy" (back blurb). Many challenges to dominant notions of Canada as a tolerant and peaceful nation appear in racial ethnic histories such as Edgar Wickberg et al.'s *From China to Canada*, the Women's Book Committee of the Chinese

Canadian National Council's *Jin Guo*, Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society*, Duke Redbird's *We are Metis*, and Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass*, to name only a few such histories. In literary studies, texts such as Smaro Kamboureli's *Scandalous Bodies*, Roy Miki's *Broken Entries*, and Julia V. Emberley's *Thresholds of Difference*, as well as collections such as Makeda Silvera's *The Other Woman* all work to show, in different ways, that multicultural discourses and other discourses of equality or diversity do not account for a range of writings, experiences, or identities in contemporary Canada.

Such diverse critiques of nation are invaluable in terms of underlining the myriad ways in which Canada is not as inclusive as it might seem. However, critiques of nation such as those I have mentioned often focus on the broader impact of national discourses on various social structures, on broadly generalized groups of people, on community programs or neighbourhood cohesiveness, and so on. With the emphasis on larger structural inequities in these writings, there is often less consideration given to the everyday workings of such national discourses in ordinary lives. [illegible] other words, the minute ways in which discourses of national inclusiveness shape particular bodies and selves is often de-emphasized, or analyzed only in brief sketches. Notably, scholars who do focus on the everyday impact of discourses of inclusiveness often turn to autobiographical narratives, as Roy Miki does, for example, in "Redress: A Community Imagined," an essay which begins, "I'm rummaging among archival boxes on redress in my study" (15), or as Howard Adams does at the opening of *Prison of Grass*: "In my halfbreed ghetto, finding a job was always difficult because the only employers were whites" (10). In this dissertation, then, I examine autobiographical writings in order to think about the everyday workings of dominant discourses that promote Canada as a place of acceptance and inclusion. Reading autobiographies by three Canadian women, while paying close attention to the national discourses of inclusiveness that partly shape these autobiographies, helps me to imagine what it might be like for some people to grow up, live, work, love, or struggle in the shadow of nation. Moreover, by focussing on the ways in which hegemonic forces work in minute and everyday ways, I can begin to think about why discourses of Canadian inclusiveness still have such power to dominate imaginings of Canada: why the views put forth recently in *The Edmonton Journal*, for example, continue to re-circulate and have power over people's lives, despite the various and growing challenges to such national dreams.

Autobiography

> But who is the "I" who speaks in self-narrations? And who is the "I" spoken about? Are the answers to these questions self-evident? I once thought so. . . .
>
> - Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories* (x-xi)

> What could be simpler to understand than the act of people writing about what they know best, their own lives? But this apparently simple act is anything but simple, for the writer becomes, in the act of writing, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation.
>
> - Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography* (1)

Autobiography is often imagined as a straightforward genre in which the life of the writer is transparently inscribed on the page of the autobiographical text. However, contemporary theorists of autobiography have shown that the autobiographical act is in fact much more complex than this. Autobiographies are not simply historical documents. They are partly fictional creations that emphasize the construction of a self, relying on the evidence of personal memories instead of, or in addition to, other sources of collective remembering such as libraries, public archives, government documents, letters, interviews, oral histories, visual representations such as photographs or paintings, and so on. At the same time, as Paul John Eakin notes, "autobiography is nothing if not a referential art," one which "signals to the reader an intended fidelity of some kind to a world of biographical reference beyond the text" (*Touching* 28). This section begins with a definition of autobiography that underlines how selves in autobiography are at once referential and fictitious, connected to particular historical and social locations, yet also multiply constructed, invented in complex, often contradictory ways. This double nature of autobiography, I suggest here, makes it a useful location to investigate the everyday workings of dominant discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada. In *The Intimate Empire*, Gillian Whitlock asks: "Is autobiography, the grounds on which many ideas about gender, race and nationality as identities have been constructed and defended, also the site where things fall apart?" (4). In this section, and in various ways throughout the dissertation, I suggest that this is indeed the case for the autobiographies in this study. The identities represented in these texts are not as seamless or transparent as they may at first appear. As I explain further when I outline my readings of these texts in a later section, the coherence of dominant discourses of inclusiveness in Canada begins to unravel in these autobiographies, partly because this coherence cannot be maintained in the face of the embodied conflicts witnessed, experienced, or sometimes evaded by the autobiographical "I" in the text.

In *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson provide a useful working definition of autobiography, or what they call life narrative: "rather than specifying its roles as a genre or form," Smith and Watson understand life narrative as "a historically situated practice of self-representation" (14). I find Smith and Watson's definition of what I will call "autobiography" here, for reasons I will explain shortly, useful in a number of ways. First, this definition underlines that autobiography is not simply a kind of transparent recording of the writer's life. It is, rather, a "practice of self-representation," and, as a number of recent critics of autobiography have observed, it is a complex and highly selective one. In *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography*, for example, Timothy Dow Adams underlines that the lies autobiographers tell may be as important as the supposed truths in the shaping of autobiographical identity. The selves represented in autobiographies are, as Paul John Eakin observes, "doubly constructed, not only in the act of writing a life story but also in a lifelong process of identity formation" (*How Our Lives* ix). Second, Smith and Watson's definition usefully imagines autobiography as a *historically situated* practice. While self-construction plays a central role in autobiography, the selves that are constructed are not simply free-floating, but rather are historically situated in a number of important ways. Unlike novels, Smith and Watson observe, autobiographies are temporally bound. Even when autobiographers offer imaginative journeys into the past or future, they "have to anchor their narratives in their own temporal, geographical, and cultural milieux" (*Reading* 9). Autobiographical texts are connected with a particular historical time and place not only through the material location of the autobiographical "I," but also through the notions of personhood available to the autobiographer at a particular historical juncture. In *The Autobiographical Subject*, Felicity Nussbaum underlines that "our concepts of self and the narratives of identity are historically bound" (8). Writing about her own field of eighteenth-century life narratives, for example, Nussbaum observes that modern readers often search for a coherent self in texts where such notions of identity may not apply, with the result that earlier texts are problematically seen as "hesitant thrusts and starts toward autonomous and continuous self-fashionings" (4). Moreover, according to Rita Felski, the politics behind any particular self-narration cannot be judged outside the historical contexts that inform both the reading and the writing of autobiography: "whether subjectivity is perceived as radical politics or self-indulgent narcissism," Felski suggests, "is at least partly dependent upon the standpoint from which it is being judged and the context in which it occurs" (108). So autobiographies are both temporally bound – located in particular times and places – and complexly constructed, among other ways, through the changing reading practices brought to the text and through the notions of personhood culturally and historically available to the writer.

In this study, I draw on several models of autobiographical practices, put forth by recent theorists of autobiography, in order to examine how inscriptions of embodied selves in three Canadian women's autobiographies might complicate discourses of national inclusion in Canada. From Paul John Eakin (*Touching the World*), I take the notion that autobiographies are simultaneously referential and fictitious, a model of autobiography I have underlined above. This "in-between" nature of autobiography, as Eakin puts it, following Serge Doubrovsky (Eakin *Touching* 26), makes autobiography a key site: to examine contemporary discourses, material practices, and institutions that support notions of national inclusiveness in Canada, since autobiographical texts "touch the world" in significant ways; to consider the impact of such discourses on particular bodies, selves, and communities represented in autobiographical texts; and to imagine other possibilities, other ways of living in or as bodies, interacting with others, or organizing communities or nations. Second, like Leigh Gilmore (*Autobiographics*) and Gillian Whitlock (*The Intimate Empire*), I consider autobiographical texts to be situated in complex networks of power. In *Autobiographics*, Gilmore, a poststructuralist feminist critic, uses a Foucauldian framework to argue that the perceived authenticity of an autobiographical text is not simply a matter of fidelity to facts, but rather a construction of dominant discourses of truth and identity that imagine only certain self-narratives to be believable or true. Whitlock applies Gilmore's notion of "autobiographics" to colonial situations to argue that ideas of colonization and resistance are deeply embedded in constructions of autobiographical identity. Both of these arguments are important to my readings of the three autobiographies in my study as texts that are situated in complex networks of power that valorize certain narratives at the expense of others.

Those narratives that conform to notions of national inclusiveness in Canada, for example, are sometimes given greater prominence by literary critics reading autobiographical texts, as I show in my reading of Campbell's *Halfbreed* in Chapter Three. While the texts in my study sometimes work to bolster the image of a happily inclusive nation, I underline the ways in which these texts are complex and conflicted documents, with various narrative trajectories that move in different directions simultaneously. Often, dominant discourses of nation are both reinforced and called into question at the site of the body in these texts, in passages where the autobiographical "I" and others in the text are imagined in ways that juxtapose discourses of national inclusion with the messiness, abjection, uncertainty, or conflictedness of embodied living. Third, from Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (*Getting a Life*), I borrow the idea of autobiographical storytelling as a complexly situated performance of identity. Such performances are solicited by various discourses and institutions and repeated in everyday practices, and their repetition has different effects, depending on the historical or cultural location in which the performance is repeated. Thus, for example, the central figure in Marlatt's *Ghost Works* attempts to perform "whiteness" differently in order to imagine Canada as a race-free space, yet the performance is interrupted by a bodily history that trails her as she moves into what she sometimes considers a new, relatively untouched national space. These notions of autobiography as both referential and fictitious, as complexly located performance, and as imaginings of self situated in networks of truth, identity, and power thread their way through this dissertation. Moreover, one theory may be more prominent than others at times in certain parts of the chapters that follow. For example, all of my readings assume that autobiographies "touch the world" in some way, to borrow Eakin's phrase. At the same time, my readings of Marlatt's *Ghost Works* and Campbell's *Halfbreed* often focus especially on performances of identity, while my reading of Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, especially toward the end of the chapter, particularly underlines dominant discourses of truth and identity that construct notions of "Chineseness" for the autobiographical "I" in the text. Finally, like theorists such as Sidonie Smith, Shirley Neuman, Paul John Eakin, and Arthur Frank, I see selves in autobiography as complexly embodied, a topic I will discuss further in the next section.

I have noted that Smith and Watson prefer the term "life narrative" to the term "autobiography." There are good reasons for this preference. Traditional scholarship on autobiography, what Smith and Watson refer to as the "first wave" of autobiography criticism, often defined autobiography in elitist ways, focussing on a narrow canon of autobiographical texts, and this early scholarship continues to shape notions of autobiography. According to Smith and Watson, early-twentieth-century German scholar Georg "Misch's notion of autobiography as the record of a representative life of the great man has long served as a norm, a 'master narrative' about the meaning and role of a particular model of life narrative in western civilization" (*Reading* 117). As scholars move away from this model of autobiography, new terms to refer to autobiographical narratives have proliferated. Smith and Watson list fifty-two terms that have been used to refer to various autobiographical texts, including relational autobiography, witnessing, scriptotherapy, journal, autofiction, poetic autobiography, testimonio, self-help narrative, collaborative life narrative, spiritual life narrative, trauma narrative, survivor narrative, and so on (*Reading* 183-207). Although the terms I have listed could be used for the texts or parts of the texts in my study, and although I do use the term "travel narrative" in the second chapter because of the importance of changing locations to my argument on Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, I generally retain the term "autobiography" here because I believe it should not simply be handed over to traditional views such as Misch's. Restricted meanings of the term "autobiography" as the record of the progressive development of a life well-lived (read white, Western, privileged male) do not even do justice to canonical texts such as Augustine's *Confessions*, which is a far more diverse and multilayered text than traditional readings would allow. In retaining the term "autobiography," then, I follow Helen Buss in *Mapping Our Selves* as she works to "refresh old terms rather than invent new ones" (14). I agree with her that the Greek roots of the term auto-bio-graphe, or self-life-writing, provide a framework that can be flexible enough to discuss a range of autobiographical practices (14) – including, for instance, Hertha Dawn Wong's reimagining of the term, in the contexts of First Nations autobiographies, as "communo-bio-oratory" (Wong 6). Like Wong and Buss, I am more interested in "expand[ing] current definitions of autobiography" than in inventing new terms (Wong 6).

Smith and Watson distinguish between four different autobiographical "I"s: the "real" or historical "I," the narrating "I," the narrated "I," and the ideological "I" (*Reading* 59). In this dissertation, I refer to all of these "I"s at various times, although I do not necessarily use the same terms as Smith and Watson; I may simply say "the narrator" or "the protagonist," for example, or I may use the author's first name to refer to the protagonist in the text.[2] According to Smith and Watson, the first "I," the "real" self of the autobiographer, is one that can never directly be known through the reading of autobiography (59) – although, as Paul John Eakin attests, the idea that there is a "real" "I" is nevertheless important to the reading of autobiography. As Eakin observes, "the autobiographical act" is "performed not in some wholly private, fietive realm of the isolate self but rather in strenuous engagement with the pressures that life in culture entails" (*Touching* 71). The second two "I"s, the narrated and narrating "I," are the teller and the protagonist of the story respectively (Smith and Watson *Reading* 59-60). As Smith and Watson underline, both of these "I"s are "multiple, fragmented, and heterogeneous" (*Reading* 60-61). These "I"s are shaped, in turn, by what Smith and Watson refer to as the ideological "I," "the concept of personhood culturally available to the narrator when he tells his story" (*Reading* 61).

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[2] Although Marlatt uses the third person "she" instead of the first person "I" through part of *Ghost Works*, the same distinctions apply.

It is partly through the tension between these different selves in autobiography, particularly as different notions of selfhood are played out both within and on the surface of the protagonist's and others' bodies in the texts, that the ruptures and inconsistencies in Canadian discourses of national inclusiveness can be seen. While discourses of national inclusiveness promise a place in nation for all Canadians, autobiographical writings may show how such national dreams smooth over the material and discursive contradictions involved in embodied lives that do not fit the parameters of those dreams. As the narrators in these autobiographies struggle to make their stories fit, or work to detach themselves from dominant discourses of nation, gender, class, and race, the gaps and fissures in these discourses become evident. In autobiography, selves are re-invented through shaping the complexities of everyday living into some kind of coherent or, when looked at more closely, often disjointed or less than coherent, narrative. Autobiographies can be a useful location to investigate the everyday workings of dominant discourses of national inclusiveness and belonging, then, in part because autobiographical narrators construct notions of selfhood in ways that deeply depend on the discourses of nation they simultaneously reinscribe, interrogate, and contest.

Although autobiography is a fertile ground for investigations of the everyday workings of national discourses of inclusion, surprisingly few critics have considered the intersection of autobiographical selves with any kind of national discourses in Canada. Indeed, despite the recent attention autobiography has received in academia, there are still relatively few extended studies on Canadian autobiographies at all. One early study, *Reflections: Autobiography and Canadian Literature* (1988), emerged from a conference on autobiography that specifically discouraged theoretically-informed approaches to autobiography. In an introduction that Canadian autobiography critic Shirley Neuman refers to as "markedly untheorized," K.P.Stich underlines his interest in "books that give an inner life to individual Canadians and add life to Canada's psyche or soul" (Neuman "Introduction" 6; Stich x). In other words, Stich assumes that autobiography should be used to buttress the nation – precisely the opposite of my argument here. Moreover, while individual contributions to Stich's collection may be more theoretically informed, as Neuman notes ("Introduction" 6), none of the articles included investigates connections between dominant discourses of nation and the autobiographical texts they examine. Another early study on autobiography published in Canada, Marlene Kadar's collection *Essays on Life Writing* (1992), includes more articles on non-Canadian autobiographies than on Canadian ones. The five articles on Canadian texts included in the collection generally consider questions of gender and the poetics of the genre rather than questions of embodied selves, communities, and nations. In her introduction to a special collection on autobiography in *Essays on Canadian Writing* (1996), Neuman notes a historical bifurcation between theoretically-informed studies of autobiography written outside Canada and "a highly localized discussion of Canadian autobiographies" (2). By underlining the split between "a nationalist and a generic approach to autobiography," however, Neuman may unwittingly contribute to a notion that studies concerned with issues of Canadianness are theoretically uninformed about recent theories of autobiography (Neuman 2). In other words, her introduction may encourage scholars to study in theoretically informed ways, rather than in ways that discuss issues of nation – as though a choice needed to be made. While Neuman touches on issues of nation in her own introduction, she does so in ways that do not radically interrogate a given content for "Canadianness." She notes, for example, that "the poetics of the genre might be seen as largely irrelevant to, or inaccurate about, the experiences being recollected" in Canada – an important point, and yet the example she gives of Canadian childhoods points only those who grew up in "Ontario bush or prairie space" as opposed to "immigrants who grew up in England"

(3), a snapshot of Canadianness that largely works to reconfirm an Anglo-Canadian centre.[3] At the same time, her idea that Canada is a specific space that needs further investigating is promising and portends of further nationally- and theoretically-informed studies of Canadian autobiography that, I believe, will appear soon. Other recent book-length studies of Canadian autobiography include Helen M. Buss' *Mapping Our Selves*, Julia Emberley's *Thresholds of Difference*, Susanna Egan's *Mirror Talk*, and Terrence L. Craig's *The Missionary Lives*. I discuss the books by Buss and Emberley at some length in my chapter on Maria Campbell. Emberley's book on First Nations women's writings is notable in that it discusses some autobiographical texts in the contexts of Canadian legislation such as the Indian Act. However, as I argue further in Chapter Three, both Buss and Emberley work, in different ways, to fit Campbell's *Halfbreed* into a model of nation that may be more homogeneous than first appears. Like Kadar's collection, Egan's *Mirror Talk* discusses both Canadian and non-Canadian texts. Egan's study is largely concerned with questions of genre, particularly the ways in which lived crises such as diaspora, genocide, and terminal illness are forces behind generic experimentation. Finally, Craig's *The Missionary Lives* takes up one specific kind of autobiography in Canada, those written by Canadian missionaries at home and abroad.

I have suggested that in the autobiographies examined in this study, embodiment plays a significant role both in disrupting and in reinscribing dominant discourses of national inclusiveness. In the next section, I investigate further how such bodily interventions might work. First, I outline some of the ways in which Michel Foucault imagines the workings of bodies in culture, underlining how feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz both borrows from and contests

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[3] Neuman further discusses Canadian autobiographies of childhood in "Life-Writing" (364-70). In this article she surveys a wider range of autobiographical practices and underlines some of the material conditions that likely prevent many people in Canada from writing their lives (338).

Foucault's inscriptive model of embodiment. I sketch out what might be at stake in various conceptions of bodies as largely material, biological, or social entities. Turning to Shannon Sullivan and other theorists of embodiment, I show how a number of contemporary scholars have worked to imagine bodies in ways that take into account both the relative plasticity of bodies as well as the profound impact of bodies on various social interactions, on constructions of selfhood, and on ways of imagining social change. Throughout the dissertation, I imagine bodies as complex texts to be read and, at the same time, as significant sources of knowledge, so that bodies both shape, and are shaped by, dominant discourses, institutions, and various cultural formations. Bodies have a profound impact on, indeed cannot be completely separated from, constructions of selfhood, relationships with others, and ways of reading and interacting with the world. Because of this, it is possible to examine the ways in which bodies are both written into, and at the same time, resistant toward, dominant cultural codes such as discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada.

Embodiment

> For the autobiographer, this body (itself, of course, already inscribed by all the variables of its cultural production) represents also the ground from which personal inscribing begins. . . . Certainly, the physical self grounds such issues as gender, color, and sexuality that are central to the cultural constructions manifest or resisted in the text.
>
> Susanna Egan, *Mirror Talk* (6-7)

> The body provides a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly

> observable, a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside, the private and the public, the self and the other, and all the other binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (20)

Like autobiographies, bodies are entities of an in-between sort. Neither simply brute matter nor completely malleable clay, bodies are partly shaped by the cultural codes they paradoxically help construct. As such, bodies often present a kind of conundrum for contemporary cultural theorists. "In writing this study of the body," Brian Turner laments in *The Body and Society*, "I have become increasingly less sure of what the body is" (qtd. in Frank "Bringing" 134). In this section, I outline contemporary approaches to embodiment that variously emphasize the social construction of bodies and the lived experiences of embodied human beings. Drawing on theorists of the body ranging from Michael Foucault and Frantz Fanon to Elizabeth Grosz and Arthur Frank, I suggest that reading the traces of bodies in autobiographies can provide a crucial step in rethinking dominant discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada. Imagining bodies not as discrete and unchanging entities, but rather as relational, context-specific, and historically contingent, in this section I examine a number of theorists who have tried to bring together both the materiality of bodies and their inscriptiveness, the ways in which bodies both shape and are shaped in and by culture. As sites where discourses of race, class, gender, and nation are reinscribed and rewritten, bodies are particularly important to imagining the gaps and fissures in multicultural discourses and other discourses of national inclusion. Contradictory discourses of identity, collectivity, and selfhood contest and collide with one another on the surface of the body, in various bodily practices, and in embodied social relations, and these various collisions profoundly shape the autobiographical texts I examine in this study. As these autobiographies trace this embodied locatedness, dominant discourses of Canadian inclusiveness come radically in conflict with representations of the messiness of embodied living, even as these discourses are continually reinscribed in various ways in these texts – on bodily surfaces, in various bodily practices, and in embodied relations with others.

In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz outlines one of Michel Foucault's main contributions to contemporary scholarship that investigates the workings of power in modern societies. For Foucault, disciplinary forces work to control individuals and groups not primarily by influencing minds, but rather by inscribing bodies. As Grosz points out, in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault defines the disciplinary power over life as bio-power, a power to regulate the minute details of daily life and behaviour in both individuals and populations (*Volatile* 152; cf. *History* 140-41). For Foucault, Grosz observes, the body is the privileged object of power's operations: power produces the body as a determinate type, with particular features, skills, and attributes (*Volatile* 149). In texts such as *Discipline and Punish*, Grosz suggests, Foucault claims that power produces a "soul" or interiority as a result of a certain type of etching of the subject's body: in Foucault's terms, the "soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (*Discipline* 30; qtd. in *Volatile* 149). According to Foucault's model of power, as Grosz neatly summarizes it, power controls the subject by surveying the body in order to produce knowledges:

> Power does not control the subject through systems of ideas – ideologies – or through coercive force; rather, it surveys, supervises, observes, measures the body's behaviour and interactions with others in order to produce knowledges. It punishes those resistant to its rules and forms; it extracts information from its punitive procedures – indeed, through all its institutions and processes – and uses this information to create new modes of control, new forms of observation, and

> thus new regimes of power-knowledge as well as, necessarily, new sites of resistance. (*Volatile* 149)

For Foucault, bio-power is not simply repressive. Rather, for Foucault, as Biddy Martin notes, "power renders the body active and productive" (9). Following Foucault's understanding of the way power and knowledge are inscribed on bodies, then, scholars investigating relationships among identities, national affiliations, and various forms of social control might productively examine the complex effects of power on bodily surfaces, in various bodily practices, and in embodied social relations.

While Grosz underlines the importance of Foucault's work to current understandings of embodiment, she also points to some of the limitations of Foucault's theories. According to Grosz, Foucault fails to take into account the specific materiality of the body – in particular, the sexual specificity of the inscribed surface. As a feminist theorist concerned with the ways in which corporeal experiences that are unique to women are given meaning in culture, Grosz sees Foucault's description of the body as a blank, passive page, a neutral "medium" for the inscription of a text, as problematic. She points out that one and the same message, inscribed on a male or a female body, does not always or even usually mean the same thing or result in the same text (*Volatile Bodies* 156). Grosz focusses primarily on what she sees as the sexual specificity of the inscribed surface. However, as Frantz Fanon argued nearly four decades earlier, racial specificities matter as well. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon searches for the cause of a painful inferiority complex that he observes among black men. For Fanon, this inferiority complex is the outcome of a double process with roots that are primarily economic, but with effects that are written on the body (11). As a psychoanalyst, he is especially concerned about what he calls "the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority" (11). Fanon claims that "the black man" suffers in bodily ways quite differently from "the white man." For Fanon, this suffering brings about not just a feeling of inferiority, but of nonexistence (138-39). Because his skin colour identifies him and *fixes* him, in the eyes of a white child passing by, as a subject defined by supposed racial characteristics, the speaker of *Black Skin, White Masks* is left with feelings of shame and self-contempt: "I took myself far from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?" (112). Echoing Fanon's early work on race and corporeality, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah likewise underline the importance of embodiment in the construction of racial identities. "Racial identities," they note, "like those along the dimensions of gender and sexuality, are defined in a peculiarly corporeal way: one's identity as an African American is rooted in one's embodiment as a black body" (3). Moreover, as numerous women of colour from bell hooks to Lee Maracle have pointed out, the experience of living as a black or Native woman cannot be reduced to the additive oppressions of race and gender. Instead, race, gender, and other axes of oppression inflect one another, as individual bodies are inscribed and lived in complex, historically specific ways.

For Foucault, the body is a surface on which culture inscribes various, sometimes contradictory meanings. Forms of identity and knowledge, as well as particular kinds of bodily suffering, are culturally inscribed on the surface of the body. Approaches to embodiment that emphasize the inscriptiveness of bodies provide an important means of contesting nineteenth-century understandings of bodies as fixed, unchanging biological entities, a view of embodiment that has been revived recently in contemporary medical and scientific discourses. R.C. Lewontin, a leading geneticist, points out that the "ideological bias of modern biology . . . . is that everything we are, our sickness and health, our poverty and wealth, and the very structure of the society we live in are ultimately encoded in our DNA" (81). Biologically determinist approaches to embodiment leave no room for social change, condemning those who suffer in bodily ways, particularly those at the bottom of the social scale, to continued suffering. As body theorists such as Grosz and Sullivan underline, however, inscriptive approaches to bodies need to be supplemented by other theories of embodiment, particularly in order to account for the complexity of lived experiences. Fanon's psychoanalytic account of what he calls "the fact of blackness" begins to examine a kind of interiority: what it feels like to live in a particular kind of body. Experiential dimensions of embodiment are emphasized not only in psychoanalytic, but also in phenomenological accounts of embodiment, as Grosz notes (*Volatile* 27, 86). Thus, for the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, "the body is not an object. It is the condition and context through which I am able to have a relation to objects. . . . It is the body as I live it, as I experience it, and as it shapes my experience that Merleau-Ponty wishes to elucidate" (*Volatile* 86). The strength of such approaches is that they take lived "experience seriously, not as something to be explained away as simply untrustworthy or 'ideological' but as something to be explained" (*Volatile* 95). However, just as Fanon conflates his own body with all black bodies while failing to account for the gendered nature of his experience, some phenomenological accounts of embodiment also generalize from experiences of particular bodies in ways that erase embodied differences, neglect the constructedness of this experience, or underestimate the importance of historical changes in ways of perceiving and experiencing selfhood, identity, or embodiment. Thus, as Grosz notes, Merleau-Ponty generalizes about lived experience without recognizing that his model of embodiment relies on an implicitly male body (*Volatile* 110). Pierre Bourdieu connects this failure of phenomenological accounts of experience with a lack of attention to "structures, laws, systems of relationships, etc." that frame experiential meanings (25-27). While Grosz critiques Merleau-Ponty from a feminist standpoint, feminist phenomenological accounts are not immune to this problem. In "Breasted Experience," feminist phenomenologist Iris Marion Young investigates what having breasts means to women, arguing, for example, that brassieres function as a barrier to touch (195). One could argue that some women appreciate how brassieres enable them to participate more easily in athletic activities; others may never have seen such a piece of clothing at all; however, Young's account does not deal with such differences. Both in psychoanalytic and in phenomenological accounts of embodied experience, the historical emplacement of particular bodies, the ever-evolving structures and cultural institutions that interact with those bodies, and the changing meanings of those bodies in relation to other bodies are sometimes left undertheorized.

In her 1993 "Bodies and Knowledges," Grosz contrasts "inscriptive" approaches to embodiment, theories such as Foucault's that analyze, in other words, "a *social*, public body," with approaches that emphasize "the lived experience of the body, the body's internal or psychic inscription" (196; emphasis in original). While Grosz doubts in this article that the two approaches are "capable of synthesis" (196), a number of contemporary theorists of embodiment are attempting to bring such approaches together.[4] Shannon Sullivan's notion of "transactional bodies," for example, works to join understandings of lived experience with an analysis of larger structural forces that interact with bodies by imagining the ways in which organisms and their environment mutually construct one another, like the ingredients in a stew (15). For Sullivan, "Thinking of bodies as transactional means thinking of bodies and their environments in a permeable, dynamic relationship in which culture does not just effect bodies, but bodies also effect culture. This relationship is one in which bodies and culture are formed from the beginning, as it were, by means of mutual constitution" (3). Moreover, as Sullivan underlines, "it is crucial that after abstracting away from the complexity and messiness of bodies, one return theory to concrete bodily life in order to test its fruits in lived experience" (4). Theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Susan Bordo have likewise tried, in various ways, to bring together theories of embodiment that emphasize interiority or lived experiences with those that emphasize exteriority or the inscriptiveness of bodies. Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus," or habitual bodily dispositions through which a culture replicates itself, focusses on such concrete experiences as "ways of talking, ways of moving, ways of making things," as well as on cultural inscriptions of bodies (Jenkins 75; cf. Bourdieu 56, 69-70). The "habitus" works to bridge the gap between theories that focus on "what individuals do in their daily lives" and those that imagine the world in terms of "supra-individual 'structures'" (Jenkins 74). In her 1993 monograph *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo argues that it is through routine, habitual activity that "our bodies learn what is 'inner' and what is 'outer,' which gestures are forbidden and which required, how violable or inviolable are the boundaries of our bodies, how much space around the body may be claimed, and so on" (16). Analyzing how representations of particular kinds of bodies (such as anorexic bodies) both homogenize and normalize, Bordo argues that the medicalization of eating disorders obscures "the ubiquitous and thoroughly *routine* grip that culture has had and continues to have on the female body, how *commonplace* experiences of depreciation, shame, and self-hatred are, and why this situation has gotten worse, not better, in the culture of the eighties" (66). Such studies of embodiment provide useful examples of ways to bring together the inscriptiveness and the lived experiences of bodies. While scholars often privilege either interiority or exteriority, inscriptiveness or lived experiences, then, along with Sullivan I would urge that "both the discursivity of bodies be acknowledged and that room be made for discussion of the concrete, had experiences of lived bodies" (61).

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[4] In *Volatile Bodies* Grosz uses the analogy of a möbius strip to imagine the link between mind and body, inner and outer, in ways that do not turn these concepts into binary oppositions. Although her book is largely structured around the distinction between inscriptive (exterior) and lived (interior) approaches to embodiment, the book as a whole works to bring these apparently incongrous theories together.

One way to think about both lived and inscriptive dimensions of embodiment is through the study of autobiography. Contemporary scholars such as Sidonie Smith, Shirley Neuman, Paul John Eakin, and Arthur Frank have begun to think about how embodiment shapes the autobiographical "I" in profound ways. In *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*, Smith argues that traditional autobiography separates a universalized and disembodied "I" from the realm of those imagined as pure bodies and as non-selves (19; cf 10). When women's bodies enter autobiographical texts, then, "unauthorized, perhaps unspeakable" experiences trouble official patriarchal histories of subjectivity and identity (4). In an early article on embodiment in autobiography, Neuman claims that the "near-effacement of bodies in autobiography" partly stems from a historical mind/body dualism in Western thought ("Appearance" 1-2). She then examines what she calls "anomalous moments" in autobiography in which "self-representations of a feminine body rupture and exceed the spiritual discourse of autobiography" (3). Like Smith, then, Neuman argues that female bodies play a particularly disruptive role in autobiography. In *How Our Lives Become Stories*, Eakin underlines the importance of embodiment in *all* contemporary inscriptions of selfhood. "Whatever the case may have been historically," Eakin argues, "there is widespread evidence in biography and autobiography today that living as bodies figures centrally *for both men and women* in their sense of themselves as selves" (37; emphasis in original). Exploring the ways in which bodies and selves are intimately linked, he argues that "any attempt to remodel our concepts of the subject, self, or consciousness . . . requires a return to the body" (9). Eakin relies not only on the evidence of autobiographical texts but also on recent developments in neurology and psychology to argue that a sense of self is always conceived in corporeal terms (41). According to his autobiography *At the Will of the Body*, Arthur Frank found his own experiences of heart attack and testicular cancer precipitated an examination of lived bodily experiences, particularly as ill people interact with medical institutions and discourses, a subject he also takes up in *The Wounded Storyteller*. In this monograph, Frank argues that seriously ill people become storytellers in order to recover their voices from dominant discourses that medicalize and depersonalize their experiences. For Frank, this recovery of voice occurs particularly through the agency of the body, when bodies speak what seems to be unspeakable:

> the problem of hearing these stories is to hear the body speaking in them. People telling illness stories do not simply describe their sick bodies; their bodies give their stories their particular shape and direction. People certainly talk about their bodies in illness stories; what is harder to hear in the story is the body creating the person. (*Wounded* 27)

Smith, Neuman, Eakin, and Frank theorize the role of bodies in autobiographies in different ways. However, all four scholars attest to the complex interconnections between psychic inscriptions, lived experiences, and cultural codes of embodiment. While Smith and Neuman begin with cultural inscriptions of bodies and see problems of embodiment as particularly gendered, Eakin and Frank begin with representations of lived bodies to underline how embodiment profoundly shapes autobiographical narratives, particularly when autobiographical selves diverge in some way from cultural norms.

Grosz' reading of Foucault's inscriptive bodies, Fanon's inquiry into the embodiedness of racial identities, contemporary theorists' attempts to bring together lived and inscriptive approaches to the body, and recent applications of body theory to the field of autobiography all help me to explore how bodies in autobiographies might interrupt national discourses. In the texts examined in this study, dominant ideas of nation, race, gender, and class are inscribed on the surface of particular bodies, with different results depending on the kinds of bodies inscribed, on the clash between different discourses played out on the surfaces of bodies, and on the ways in which these discourses are interiorized or incorporated in everyday lives. My readings of these texts suggest that complex discourses of inclusion and exclusion cannot be transformed by sheer force of will, since these discourses are realized in bodily terms. In *Halfbreed*, for example, Maria cannot escape the designation of herself as "Indian" by the racist white man at the welfare office; at the same time, the category "Indian" slips, at times including her body, and at other times excluding her as a Métis woman, and this slippage ultimately helps her to deconstruct pejorative labels even as she struggles to inhabit her body, stand alongside others whose lives have been similarly marginalized, and represent her people in her words and actions. While representations of embodied experience point to a gap between discourses of national inclusion and embodied social relations, I also examine moments in these texts where elisions of embodied experience occur – in the tension between different narrative trajectories, in the displacement of bodily experiences onto some other subject or object, or in the refusal of some embodied social relation, for example. National discourses are called into question in these texts both in representations of embodied experience and in textual moments where embodied connections are refused or where embodied experiences are transposed into something else – displaced onto the statue of a white lady in *Ghost Works* or onto the gift of a coat in *The Concubine's Children*, for example. Whether present or conspicuously absent, bodies speak in these texts, both rehearsing and challenging the dominant discourses that shape the life of the autobiographical "I."

Recent studies of embodiment and of autobiography help me to examine some of the embodied ways in which discourses of national inclusiveness are realized in everyday lives. However, some of the studies I draw on here rely on either overly generalized or overly narrow models of selfhood and embodiment that I call into question in the next section. While theories of autobiography such as Eakin's sometimes imply that a transhistorical "self" exists across all times and cultures, postcolonial theories underline the ways in which notions of selfhood and modernity are often constructed through opposition with a postcolonial Other, making access to selfhood a vexed issue in postcolonial locations. While body theorists such as Sullivan and Grosz sometimes generalize about all bodies from predominantly Western experiences of embodiment or overemphasize gender at the expense of other markers of difference, materialist theories allow me to examine the ways in which representations and experiences of embodiment are historically specific, varying widely across changing historical and cultural formations. In the following section, then, I outline my use of postcolonial and materialist theories as a way of framing, and sometimes calling into question, some of the theories of autobiography and embodiment outlined in the previous two sections. Postcolonial and materialist theories allow me to return to questions of national inclusiveness in ways that help me to envision the "unevenness" of contemporary discourses and social formations, to borrow Mary Poovey's term; to sketch out the inequitable global contexts that frame the national questions and concerns I address here; and to underline the possibilities for social change imagined, worked through, or sometimes displaced in these autobiographies. In my research for this study, materialist and postcolonial theories have aided, jostled with, and collided against the predominantly feminist investigation that preceded this study, as I discuss in a brief account of the origins of this project. In the following section, then, I further sketch out my methodology, moving beyond the theories of nation, autobiography, and embodiment outlined here to consider more specifically the ways in which national identities, autobiographical representations, and various bodily experiences may be shaped both historically and globally, in the context of changing material conditions and ongoing colonial relations.

Methodology

> No perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have

> been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self.
>
> Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts" (253)

> Too frequently learning about human diversity means celebrating or appreciating "difference" rather than acquiring the critical frameworks to understand how and why social differences are reproduced. In its liberal manifestations, multicultural studies helps to re-form the cultured liberal self into a more porous subject who is open to difference. This "openness" too often means that the student can see and even honor cultural difference, but does not have to examine, change, or be responsible to the economic and political power structures difference is entangled within.
>
> Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (11)

In the sections above, I discuss three key terms used in this dissertation: nation, autobiography, and embodiment. In the first section, I show how discourses of national inclusiveness circulate in Canada in ways that obscure issues of power and difference, smoothing over historical and ongoing conflicts through reference to a Canadianness that supposedly unites us all. While such discourses confirm the centrality of some lives, others find themselves marginalized, their concerns displaced from ideas of Canadianness, often by the very discourses, institutions, and practices that proclaim this inclusiveness. In the second section, I suggest that autobiography is a useful location to think through issues of power and difference obscured in dominant discourses of national inclusion, in part because of the in-between nature of autobiography. The embodied selves represented in autobiography are complexly positioned, located in particular cultural contexts and historical moments even as they are located in intricate networks of power that privilege certain narratives of identity over others. The autobiographies examined in this study provide an important means of thinking through some of the ways in which discourses of national inclusiveness continue to dominate the bodies and lives of particular Canadians. In the third section, I examine more closely how bodies speak in certain autobiographical texts. Drawing on theories of embodiment that attempt to bring together both the inscriptiveness and the lived experience of bodies, I underline the complex interconnections between psychic inscriptions, lived experiences, and cultural codes of embodiment. Attending to embodied experiences in autobiography allows me to trace the ways in which dominant discourses are both reinscribed and contested at the site of the body: how discourses of nation, race, gender, and class that shape everyday lives play out on the surface of bodies and in habitual bodily practices represented in three autobiographical texts.

In the broadest sense, attending to representations of embodied experience in autobiography allows me to think about the complex and uneven ways in which social change happens, or does not happen. This dissertation aims to work toward progressive social change not just by critiquing oppressive social discourses and relations, but by examining the ways in which dominant discourses of national inclusiveness are embedded in daily practices and in everyday lives. By focussing on autobiographical representations of embodied selfhood, I can begin to imagine how the exclusive effects of discourses of national inclusion might be contested. One crucial step toward such contestation involves tracing the ways in which such discourses are represented, acted out, imagined, and embodied. Dominant discourses of gender, race, class, and nation are written in and on bodies in ways that call into question idealist prescriptions for social change, prescriptions that do not radically take into account the importance of everyday, embodied social interactions. At the same time, because dominant discourses of national inclusiveness and belonging are continually reenacted and embodied in historical, and historically shifting ways, oppressive social relations can be transformed: not only through changing larger social structures and institutions, but also through changing how we relate to one another in daily ways, as complexly embodied human beings. In order to do so, I suggest, we need to be able to hear the subtle ways in which bodies both speak and contest the social codes that write them. One way to do so is to examine how bodies speak in autobiographical texts.

When I began research for this dissertation, my initial inquiries were partly motivated by my experience as a masters' student at the University of Alberta and as a full-time instructor at the University College of the Cariboo. I outline this history briefly here, in order to show how postcolonial, feminist, and materialist theories have helped me to investigate some of the complex relationships among embodiment, autobiographical identities, and discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada. While my masters' thesis explored representations of female embodiment and subjectivity in three novels by Virginia Woolf, I found there was a gap between my readings, the psychoanalytic, deconstructive, and other poststructuralist theories that informed my work, and my own experiences in Canada. The primary focus on gender in my work at this time did not seem to address the complex issue of Woolf's relatively privileged position in a British class society; moreover, beyond a few fleeting comments that I found in some of her works, issues of race and colonialism seemed almost entirely occluded, at least with the theoretical tools I had at hand to read these texts. Woolf's writings both echoed with, and at the same time seemed somehow distant from, my daily experiences as a college instructor in central British Columbia. The issues addressed in my masters' thesis seemed even further removed from the lives of many of my students, particularly those who came from the Shushwap reserve near the college or from other First Nations communities in and around Kamloops. The University College of the Cariboo has the largest First Nations student population of any post-secondary institution in British Columbia ("First Nations"). These students' lives were never simply determined by issues of gender: issues of race and colonialism were also pressing matters here. Despite this large student body, I found it difficult to attract many First Nations students to the Status of Women Committee I chaired for two years, a failure that derived in part, no doubt, because of my largely mainstream feminist presumptions about what gendered experiences might entail and about which issues in the college most pressingly required feminist engagement. Meanwhile, a Métis friend tutored a number of First Nations students outside class for me, often able to reach them in ways I could not. Students would sometimes arrive back in class saying "so that's what you meant!", having connected not with my teachings on the basics of essay writing, but with Allyson's explanation of Native storytelling as a form of argument. While I prided myself on a kind of multicultural inclusiveness in the classroom through my choice of texts, through "multicultural" guest lectures, and through what I thought of as a kind of inclusive, feminist-inspired pedagogy, in practice, this inclusiveness did not always happen. At the same time, students would come to my office with stories of defiance, misunderstanding, triumph, or abuse, their narratives unfolding not only through their words, but also through their bodies: shifting postures, facial expressions, gestures, or movements seemed to speak in a variety of ways, animating or erasing their struggles, their achievements, or their pain.

When I turned to my doctoral work, I wanted to find some way to think about the gaps, the failures, the ruptures, and the displacements in some of these experiences: the huge chasm, in other words, between European literary theories, Woolf's texts, my own embodied experiences, and the embodied experiences of some of my students. In addition to issues of gender that I explored in my masters' thesis, I needed a way to think through problems of colonization, racialization, cultural differences, physical and cultural locatedness, and class-based inequities. As I turned to contemporary autobiographical texts by Canadian women, I wanted to attend to these issues – to the locatedness of particular experiences of embodied selfhood, to the powerful, life-shaping influence of specific historical and cultural contexts, and perhaps most of all, to the importance of issues of power and difference that both intersect with and go beyond those of gender. I found that postcolonial theories allowed me to think about race and global modes of domination, while materialist theories allowed me to think through issues of class and historicity. Of course, theories of postcoloniality and materialism are both complex and diverse, with postcolonial theorists often attending carefully to material histories, and materialist feminists often addressing questions of race, for example. As I continued my research into Canadian women's autobiography, I found that postcolonial and materialist theories together helped me to analyze issues of race, class, and colonization that I began to trace not only in my work as a teacher, but also in the autobiographical texts I began to read.

In this section, then, I outline how this dissertation draws on postcolonial and materialist theories in ways that have allowed me to address some of the issues that motivated my initial investigations. Postcolonial theories allow me to consider how notions of selfhood, identity, or subjectivity are embedded in inequitable global contexts and in struggles for decolonization. At times, the autobiographical "I" in the texts I examine here works to construct a self that aligns her with dominant discourses of national inclusiveness, in ways that repeat the colonial gestures that both restrict and enable her. At other times, the autobiographical "I" finds ways to resist various forms of colonization, both individual and collective, local and global. Postcolonial theories help me to trace these moves, the movement of the embodied self from intactness to dissolution, from local to global struggles for collective identity or autonomy, from colonization to decolonization and back again. While postcolonial theories help me attend to the intricate connections among selfhood, embodiment, inclusiveness, and (de)colonization, materialist theories help me to think about the ways in which these texts are embedded in complex historical and social contexts. The identities imagined in these texts are not free-floating, in other words, but rather are anchored in particular historical and material relations: what it means to be Métis for the autobiographical "I" in Campbell's 1973 autobiography *Halfbreed* is shaped by heated debates over the meaning of "Indianness" following the failure of Trudeau's 1969 White Paper on Indian policy, for example. Materialist theories allow me to think about embodied identities in ways that attend to material conditions, to changing historical situations, and to what Mary Poovey calls the "unevenness" of social formations. While I focus on materialist and postcolonial theories here, at the beginning of the next section, I will outline what I see as some of the underlying feminist concerns of this dissertation, as well as the ways in which my commitment to feminist principles has shaped this project in changing ways, from the initial research to the final writing.

In *Uneven Developments*, Mary Poovey underlines that although dominant ideologies sometimes "look coherent and complete," they may actually be "fissured by competing emphases and interests" (3). Poovey's statement, central to her cultural materialist approach, acknowledges both the power of dominant cultural formations as well as the ways in which these formations are subject to historical change. This possibility of change emerges not so much because one solid, internally consistent social formation eventually gives way to another, but because a given cultural formation is itself made up of a complex tangle of earlier and ongoing formations, which are themselves internally contradictory and incoherent. This idea of uneven cultural developments is important to my work in this dissertation. While the subject of Poovey's investigation is the ideological work of gender in mid-Victorian England, her conclusions about the unevenness of ideological work might well apply to the discourses of national inclusiveness that I examine here. According to Poovey, the dominant Victorian ideology of gender that she examines "was both contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formations" (3). It is in this sense that Poovey uses the phrase "uneven developments": "The system of ideas and institutions I examine here, in other words, was uneven, and it developed unevenly" (3). Poovey's focus on "uneven developments" has much in common with the methods of cultural materialism first developed by the British literary critic and social theorist Raymond Williams. In the paragraphs that follow, I outline what I find most useful in Williams' cultural materialist approach. At the same time, in order to address questions of colonialism and race that are sometimes left unaddressed in Williams' work, I also turn to postcolonial theories, as I explain in the latter part of this section.

In his influential book *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams underlines "the indissoluble connections between material production, political and cultural institutions and activity, and consciousness" (80). For Williams, this statement reflects a central tenet of cultural materialism: that material forces, human interactions, cultural activities, and ways of knowing overlap with and shape one another in complex ways. Cultural endeavours cannot be completely separated from the forces of production, in other words, and ways of experiencing identities, beliefs, and human relationships likewise cannot be separated from cultural institutions, from complex economic relations, and from a range of human activities. As Landry and Maclean note, Williams "regards the study of culture to be as important for grappling with material reality as the study of economics or Marxist philosophy" (5). While Williams emphasizes human agency, he does not assume that human beings can simply act or be in the world in ways that are disconnected from the social and historical situation they find themselves in. Instead, Williams sees consciousness as complexly embedded in the changing forces of social production, in complex cultural relations that are often ignored or downplayed in classical Marxist theories, and in the complex and shifting material relations of a given society. In *Re-Imagining Cultural Studies*, Andrew Milner notes that Raymond Williams "coined the term [cultural materialism] to denote his own break from an older tradition of British Communist Marxism, on the one hand, and that distinctly British version of literary humanism associated above all with the Leavises, on the other" (18). Borrowing from the techniques of literary critics at Cambridge who taught him the importance of close textual analysis, Williams pays attention to the formal properties of literary texts to avoid unsubstantiated generalizations of traditional Marxists, who used literary texts simply to confirm the broad socialist march of history (cf. Higgins 102-05). At the same time, in his work Williams repeatedly challenges the liberal politics of his formalist teachers. One of Williams' major disagreements with the orthodoxies of Cambridge English, dominated in his early life as an academic by F.R. Leavis, Queenie Leavis, and others who have come to be known as the New Critics, is that their formalist approach to literary criticism divorced "the masses" from an elite and ignored the writers' "engagement with 'a real social history'" (Higgins 60, 81). For the Leavises, the major task of literary studies was to defend Culture in the face of the uncultured tastes of a new mass-reading public (Higgins 17, 59). Against this notion, Williams defines culture as a "'whole way of life,'" thus including a broad range of human thoughts, activities, and interactions in his idea of culture (qtd. in Higgins 62). For Williams, the crucial tasks for the literary critic grow out of, and at the same time contest, earlier Marxist and formal humanist approaches to literary texts. Underlining both the political nature of literary forms and conventions and the embeddedness of literary texts in complex social relations, Williams argues that formal choices are not merely aesthetic choices. Rather, such choices reflect, help produce, and at the same time, potentially disrupt the various social relations out of which they arise. According to Higgins, in the "new paradigm of study" Williams pursues in his work, "a text is read formally, in terms of the play of its generic and internal construction; it is located historically, both in terms of its means and conditions of original production, and also in relation to the history of its readings; and it is read theoretically, in terms of whatever questions can be productively put to it" (173).

In this study, I often employ a method of formal textual analysis by now familiar to contemporary Western literary critics. At the same time, following Williams, I attempt to locate this analysis in social and historical terms, showing the ways in which the autobiographical texts I read are connected to a range of discourses, material relations, and complex social histories. I do not suggest that the texts I read always contest dominant discourses and social formations, nor do they always simply replicate them. Rather, the texts, themselves material, circulate in different contexts with different meanings for different audiences, and interact with a variety of social forces in complex ways. As Williams underlines, the formal properties of texts are both politically and socially determined, requiring not just a formal but also a kind of cultural analysis in order to understand the social conflicts and material conditions out of which they arise. While I often employ some of the broad techniques that Williams uses, reading the autobiographical texts in this study formally, historically, and theoretically, I do not follow this interpretive paradigm in any strict or mechanistic way, insisting that all three kinds of readings are engaged to the same degree or in the same ways at all times. For example, I do not always investigate the critical reception of the texts in each chapter, in part because these texts, published within the last few decades, do not always have the same lengthy critical history that would apply to more canonical texts. Moreover, the theoretical questions I ask in each chapter are likely not the ones that Williams would ask. Indeed, Williams was not overwhelmingly interested in questions concerning the nation-state; he did not always attend sufficiently to global contexts of colonialism and imperialism; and his lack of attention to matters of gender have drawn criticism from several commentators on his work.[5] However, I have found the outlines of Williams' approach useful as a way of broadly sketching out my own methodology, one that combines close textual readings with "historical and theoretical analysis" (Higgins 173). This approach allows me to investigate the ways in which the autobiographies in this study are both embedded within, and sometimes but not always resistant toward, dominant discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada, as well as discourses of race, class, and gender that simultaneously feed into and interrupt this national dream. In my readings, then, autobiographical texts are not divorced from the larger culture. Rather, these texts are both produced out of, and in various and sometimes contradictory ways responsive to, dominant discourses, material forces, and particular social conflicts that frame the texts in this study.

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[5] For a discussion of feminist responses to Williams' work, see Shiach; see also Milner 174-75.

While Williams' method of cultural materialism has informed this study in a number of ways, I have also found it necessary to draw on postcolonial theory. In part, this may be because the texts, the social contexts, and the theoretical issues I examine here – broadly speaking, an analysis of embodied subjects in autobiography who do not fit easily within "multicultural" notions of Canadianness – differ, in a number of ways, from the analysis of a British class system that most engaged Williams. Gauri Viswanathan, a postcolonial scholar appreciative of Williams' contributions to cultural materialism, nonetheless critiques Williams for his failure to account for British imperialism in ways that attend to the complexities of culture on a global scale. According to Viswanathan, while Williams imagines "culture and society as activity," thereby challenging the orthodox Marxist reading "of base-superstructural relations as fixed abstractions," he fails to apply this fluid description of culture to imperial relations (196). Viswanathan is not alone in critiquing Williams from a postcolonial perspective. According to Hall, Williams' work "remains both blind to questions of race and framed by certain 'national' cultural assumptions" (360).[6] In a similar vein, R. Radhakrishnan asks: "what are the limits of Williams's theory, and how and under what conditions can his theory be made to travel from the center to the periphery, from the First World to far-removed postcolonial situations?" (277). It is not my intention to provide a detailed critique of Williams' work from a postcolonial perspective here, since such critiques have already been made, for example, in Dworkin and Roman's collection *Views Beyond the Border Country*. Instead, I wish to outline briefly what I have found particularly useful for this dissertation in the broad and ever-expanding field of postcolonial studies.

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[6] While Hall correctly notes that Williams did not have diasporic communities in mind in his writings, his specific critique of Williams' argument, that Williams did not consider "Whose *way*? Which *life*? One way or several?" in his notion of culture as "a whole way of life," is somewhat ahistorical (Hall 359). As Williams points out, the idea of a "common culture" arose

Postcolonial theory allows me to consider the impact of various colonial relations both on the construction of embodied selves in autobiography and on ideas of Canada as an inclusive nation. These colonial relations include histories of racial oppression that dominant discourses of Canadianness work to downplay or erase; struggles for power, recognition, or autonomy among First Nations, recent immigrants, and descendants of various settlers in Canada, as well as certain clashes that occur within, and disrupt the boundaries of, these groups; and conflicted identities that arise within, and form part of, struggles for decolonization within Canada. While I refer to "postcolonial theory" here, the phrase may be somewhat misleading. The field of postcolonial studies has expanded enormously in the last two decades, with little agreement about what constitutes the terrain. There is no single postcolonial theory, as scholars such as Stephen Slemon and Henry Schwarz underline. Instead, it may be more accurate to refer to postcolonial *discourses*, as Gregory Castle does in his recent collection.[7] Among these discourses, I have

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in debates from "the fifties and very early sixties," and its use is best understood in this context (*Politics* 193). At the time, Williams strove precisely to raise the question of who owns a culture (or Culture). One of the major points of Higgins' *Raymond Williams* is that Williams' work itself must be read in the context of particular historical debates to which Williams was responding. See also Milner 118 ff. for a further discussion of the clash between Hall and Williams.

[7] According to Slemon, it is "just about impossible to answer" the question, "What is post-colonial theory?" ("Post-colonial" 100). At the beginning of his introduction to *Postcolonial*

found what Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson refer to as "settler postcolonialism" particularly useful in my efforts to examine the ways in which colonial relations are produced and reproduced within the borders of Canada. At the same time, both settler and other forms of postcolonial theory help me to think about Canadian identities in the contexts of *global* systems of domination. What it means to be "Chinese Canadian," in other words, as I discuss in the context of Chong's *The Concubine's Children* in the first chapter, is never simply determined from within the borders of Canada. Rather, such identities are connected with larger cultural processes and global networks of power that permeate, extend beyond, and at the same time, help construct both individual and national identities, shaping boundaries of bodies, selves, and nations in uneven, messy, historically changing ways.

In her influential 1985 article "Three Women's Texts," Gayatri Spivak emphasizes how the construction of identity in the West often involves the concomitant construction of an Other to consolidate a Western (imperialist) self. Recent postcolonial critics from Australia, Canada, and other "Second World" locations have complicated this formula by noting the ways in which identity has always been a complex issue in settler colonies. However, many postcolonial critics have been slow to accept the study of settler identities as a necessary and legitimate area of postcolonial inquiry. In *The Intimate Empire*, Gillian Whitlock claims that "[t]hinking about settlers is deeply unfashionable in postcolonial criticism" (41). This sentiment is echoed in the scholarship of Diana Brydon, Stephen Slemon, Helen Tiffin, and Johnston and Lawson, among others, all of whom have argued, in different ways, that it is crucial for the field of postcolonial

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Studies, Schwarz observes: "Anyone looking for a single, simple definition of this field will be disappointed by what follows" (1). Castle notes that "there is a multiplicity of origins or theoretical foundations for postcolonial theory" (xiii). Instead of referring to postcolonial theory, then, Castle uses the phrase "postcolonial discourses" to emphasize "an array of written responses to colonialism that includes theoretical reflection, meta-discursive critique, discourse analysis, historical analysis, and literary criticism" (xii).

studies to consider the ambivalent role of settlers and settler colonies in various colonial projects. To understand why settlers have been "unfashionable" subjects for some postcolonial scholars, it is helpful to consider the ways in which postcolonial studies emerged from several critical precursors. As Stephen Slemon underlines in his 1990 article "Unsettling the Empire," what is known today as postcolonial studies has grown out of three competing and conflicting fields: studies of Commonwealth literature that worked to displace an Anglocentric canon; studies of emerging Third- and Fourth-World subjectivities; and studies of anti-colonial resistance (32). According to Slemon, the strand that emerged from Commonwealth literary studies has been marginalized in dominant postcolonial discourses by the conflation of the two other competing fields (32-33). In part, then, the marginalization of settler postcolonialism has sometimes occurred because settlers can never be imagined as completely resistant subjects. Instead, they are always positioned in ambivalent ways with respect to the workings of colonialism, simultaneously subjected to and profiting from colonial relations. For those scholars whose work draws on what was formerly known as Commonwealth studies, this ambivalence is what makes settlers such important subjects in a field whose aim is not only to study, but also ultimately to transform, colonial relations as they appear in different guises in various locations around the globe.[8]

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[8] Brydon reviews some of the ways "settler-colony postcolonialism" has been dismissed in her 1995 introduction to a special collection of *Essays on Canadian Writing* (9-10). That the field of postcolonialism may be somewhat more accepting of settler studies than it was a few years ago is suggested by the publication of collections such as *Postcolonial Discourses* (2001), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (2000), and *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth* (2000). In the first collection, editor Gregory Castle emphasizes the importance of location, highlighting the ways in which postcolonial theory has developed in different ways in various cultural contexts. Schwarz and Ray's *Companion* includes the article on settler postcolonialism by Johnston and Lawson, as well as a forward in which prominent theorist Gayatri Spivak underlines a view of postcolonialism that includes different postcolonial spaces, including ambivalent settler spaces ("Forward" xv). The third collection, Rowland Smith's *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth*, works to bring together a number of postcolonial scholars whose work derives largely from the "Commonwealth" thread of postcolonial theory. The latter text is particularly promising in that many contributors work toward understanding various settler relations in terms of a kind of unequal "side-by-sideness"

Writings on settler postcolonialism have helped me to think about Canada as an ambivalent space, a space where settlers are simultaneously colonized and colonizing, and where colonialism operates in complex ways: for example, through ostensibly progressive practices and discourses such as those of multiculturalism. Postcolonial studies of settlers have helped me to imagine the autobiographical "I" in all three texts in this study as ambivalently located, "both colonized and colonizing" as Johnston and Lawson put it (363) – even in the case of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, where the category of the settler itself becomes destabilized, since Maria's Métis community radically disrupts the indigenous/settler binary itself.

If more than a few postcolonial scholars rejected the study of settler postcolonialism altogether a few short years ago, "Second World" scholars have sometimes responded to this rejection by imagining settlers in monolithic or homogenized ways. This is perhaps not surprising: in order to draw attention to this rejection, "the settler" needed to be brought into focus. As Johnston and Lawson have observed, "much of the writing about settler cultures has appeared to assume that these cultures are ethnically homogeneous populations of Anglo-Celts. . . . This has been theoretically convenient but not empirically sound" (372). Even Johnston and Lawson refer to the "typical settler narrative," assuming a broad similarity across different kinds of settler stories (369). My dissertation suggests that settler postcolonial studies could benefit from an analysis of embodiment in the construction of settler identities, in order to dismantle homogenized notions of "the settler." To unravel the assumption that settlers are a rather homogeneous lot (and often implicitly white), my study examines how conflicted scripts of race, class, gender, and nation complicate settler (and "non-settler") Canadian spaces represented in

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rather than in strictly oppositional terms, as Rowland Smith underlines in his introduction (4). These and other recent collections leave me hopeful that the conflict between "settler" and "Third- or Fourth-World" postcolonialism is being rethought in useful ways in the current critical moment.

three women's autobiographies. As I will explain further in the next section, the first chapter examines some of the historical and discursive problems with imagining Canadian settlers who are neither white nor male, particularly when notions of "the pioneer" have been conflated with these identities. Borrowing from contemporary whiteness theory, the second chapter works to dismantle the supposed racelessness of Canadian society by showing one woman's struggle with her own gendered whiteness. Finally, the third chapter underlines the heterogeneity often obscured by notions of resistance that imagine a purely resistant Fourth World, a purely resistant Indianness.

The Texts

While the autobiographies I planned to study changed as my research for this project progressed, in all its incarnations, the dissertation always focussed on women's lives. This focus was influenced by a number of second-wave feminist writers ranging from Elaine Showalter and Annette Kolodny to Luce Irigaray, Michele Barrett, Rita Felski, and Toril Moi, whose various works emphasized for me the importance of investigating women's changing lives and identities (cf. Felski 1). Yet I was also aware of critiques of mainstream feminist preoccupations with middle-class white women's identities and the concomitant eclipsing of "other" women's lives, critiques launched initially by women of colour such as bell hooks, Lee Maracle, and the Combahee River Collective, and echoed later in works by white women such as Ruth Frankenberg and Vron Ware. Having emerged from the successes and failures of teaching a diverse body of college students and of chairing the UCC Status of Women Committee, I found my work torn in two directions, and traces of this struggle no doubt appear here. Inspired by work on a committee that managed to have an impact on college policies and practices despite its flaws, I wanted to think carefully about women's lives in Canada, finding some way to imagine threads – however strong, intricate, or diaphanous – that would connect their diverse lives. At the same time, I wanted to avoid too-easy assumptions about gender, class, or race that continued to underwrite much mainstream feminist theory, sometimes marred the work of the Status of Women Committee, and likely hampered my exchanges with students in the classroom.

My initial investigations focused on expanding understandings of gendered identities in Canadian women's autobiography. At the outset, I wanted texts that I found difficult to read or interpret. Choosing among recent autobiographies so that they would provide some picture of contemporary Canadian women's identities, I looked for texts that would jar against one another in terms of both form and content. Reading texts that might speak to one another only with difficulty would preclude, I hoped, some of the easy generalizations that sometimes characterized early feminist criticism on women's autobiography, as in the work of Mary Mason or Estelle Jelinek, for example. Most of all at this early stage, I did not want texts that simply mirrored my own experiences or engaged my own prejudices about what it meant to be either a woman or a Canadian. As my study progressed, however, I increasingly found that the category of gender could not simply unite these women's lives in any sustained way. Influenced particularly by writings on race and gender by women of colour such as Hazel Carby, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, Makeda Silvera, Nourbese Philip, and others, I began to realize that women's lives are always historically emplaced, and that gender can best be understood in particular contexts, as it interacts with other determinants of identity, such as nationality, race, or class. While bodies cannot simply connect women across the many differences which divide them, all must live through the daily complexities of living in and as bodies. My study evolved, then, to focus on how three women autobiographers imagined their lives in the contexts of discourses of race, class, gender, and nation that purported to encapsulate, but could never really capture, the embodied daily-ness of their lives.

I do not wish to suggest here that these autobiographers are representative of other Canadian women writers. To begin with, all three autobiographers write narratives that take place in Western Canada. My study does not include texts by francophone women writers.[9] Although Daphne Marlatt is a lesbian, *Ghost Works* was written prior to this identification, and I do not focus on issues of sexual orientation in the text. There are no Inuit women writers in my study, nor do I focus on issues of agism or physical disability, and so on. It is clear that there are huge areas of women's experiences in Canada that my dissertation does not cover. However, to attempt to present an exhaustive study of Canadian women's experiences here would run counter to a major focus of this dissertation: the attempt to listen to particular autobiographies in ways that attend to embodied differences, to the ways in which certain notions of national inclusiveness do not always account for the historically contingent, embodied daily-ness of the lives represented in these texts. At the same time, I have deliberately chosen texts by a Chinese Canadian, a white Canadian, and a Métis Canadian woman autobiographer respectively, partly in order to show how ideas of Canada as an inclusive nation fall apart, in various ways, for all three of these autobiographers, as do the identity tags (such as "Chinese Canadian") through which I refer to them here.

All three autobiographies in this study engage with dominant discourses of nation and (dis)embodiment that purport to provide the autobiographical "I" a comfortable place in Canadian society. "Comfortable" is a relative term here, for these women are positioned very differently within various social hierarchies and through the dominant discourses that shape their bodies, lives, and relations with others. In Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, this comfortable place is the possibility being able to fit into Canadian society without the need to carry what the autobiographical "I" sees as the burden of whiteness, the burden of knowing her ancestors were deeply implicated in colonial relations that seem to happen, or that she hopes only happen, elsewhere. In Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, the promise is also one of racelessness, but here it is a multicultural vision of Canada in which the "fact of Chineseness," like Fanon's "fact of blackness," is apparently wiped away, displaced from the central figure's body and the bodies of her mother and grandmother, projected onto others so that this "fact" no longer appears to matter. In Campbell's *Halfbreed*, it is not so much the idea of racelessness that beacons to the autobiographical "I," but rather the possibility that she could play "Indianness" so successfully that she could earn a place in society, however marginal this place might be. The autobiographies in this study were published over a span of two decades – Campbell's *Halfbreed* in 1973, Marlatt's *Ghost Works* in 1993, and Chong's *The Concubine's Children* in 1994. In some ways, Campbell's text is situated at an earlier moment in Canadian history, published just two years after Prime Minister Trudeau announced his new multicultural policy. At the same time, the three autobiographies cross and re-cross over each other in historical time, with all three texts stretching back to include family histories spanning several generations and, in the case of Chong and Marlatt, extending across two and three continents respectively. Marlatt's *Ghost Works* collects three previously published travel writings, the earliest of which was published just a few years after *Halfbreed*, in 1977. Campbell's autobiographical narrative in *Halfbreed* has been rewritten in film, in theatre, and most recently, in book form, and its critical history marks some of the changing ways that otherness has been imagined in Canada in the three decades since its publication. All three of the autobiographies in this study investigate how ideas of gender, race, class, and nation are enacted in embodied ways in daily lives, as the bodies and lives represented in the texts jostle uncomfortably with the idealized scripts they variously strive to transform, reject, or inhabit.

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[9] The inclusion of women writers from Québec would have expanded this study in interesting ways, particularly since debates over ideas of nation potentially look quite different from the vantage point of those living in the only province with a francophone majority. For many Québecoise as well as for many First Nations writers, the word "nation" invokes an idea not of Canada, but rather of a different community, francophone for the former, First Nations for the latter, resistant toward ideas of nation linked with the nation-state. At the same time, francophone writers from other provinces would add another level of complexity once again, since these communities fall beyond the borders of a potentially emergent, separate Québec nation-state.

The first chapter, "'The Work of Citizenship': Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*," focuses on a dilemma that confronts autobiographer Denise Chong as she reconstructs a troubling family history. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong works to revalue her maternal grandmother, a waitress vilified in numerous family stories as an alcoholic, a gambler, and a quasi-prostitute, by rewriting her as a Canadian pioneer whose strength and hard work allowed her descendants to prosper in a modern multicultural nation. To do so, Chong both connects May-ying's body with, and ultimately disconnects it from, a kind of "Chineseness" that seems to have no place in dominant ideas of who might be a worthy Canadian ancestor, settler, or pioneer. May-ying's body, in many ways loathed within the extended family, is reread in *The Concubine's Children* as a sign of Western modernity. This rereading, I argue, is the "work of citizenship": Chong can only value her grandmother as a Canadian pioneer in this text by imagining that she is the first woman in the family who left Chineseness behind. By displacing an unwanted Chineseness onto relatives left behind in China, *The Concubine's Children* reinscribes a process of cultural projection and bodily shame that the text also works to dismantle. While dominant discourses of multiculturalism purport to solve issues of racial relations, my reading of Chong's text underlines that these discourses sometimes embed racist beliefs more deeply, engraving them on Canadian bodies in ways that make it difficult to incorporate knowledge about Canada's racialized past in embodied interactions with one another. The scapegoating of May-ying and the bodily distancing from the Chinese side of the family, I argue, may themselves be symptomatic of our inability as a nation to deal either with embodied differences or with a horrific racial past, one that continues into embodied social relations in the present.

In some ways, Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* underlines the belief that Canada is a place where racial tensions and gender inequities can be left behind. At the same time, distressing modes of racialization and stereotypes about Chinese women surface in the text in ways that undercut this belief. The complex tensions that arise in juxtaposing notions of Canada as a kind of idealized space with the more complex bodily relations that both support and contest such notions also occur in Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, although in a different form. While the autobiographical "I" in Chong's text struggles with the legacy of a family that has emerged into relative affluence and apparent racelessness in Canada, in Marlatt's text, it is a history of colonial wealth and white privilege that the central figure wishes to leave behind. The second chapter, "'her own white face': Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*," shows how Marlatt complicates the popular notion that Canada is somehow more racially innocent than other nations. Exploring what it means to come from Canada as she travels elsewhere, the central autobiographical figure in *Ghost Works* realizes that the country she still wishes to see as a new and anti-imperial space – the way she thought of it years ago when she immigrated to Canada with her family – ultimately cannot be separated from her own embodied past or from what she sees as the horrors of a white colonialism she wishes to associate with elsewhere. Crossing both physical and mental borders, engaging in physical movement that repeatedly underlines her role in perpetuating racial and colonial hierarchies, the traveller sometimes arrives at a very different notion of Canadianness than the one she would like to believe in. Her desire to see Canada as a radically egalitarian nation is repeatedly challenged by a stubborn bodily inheritance that comes directly into conflict with such nationalist longings.

In the third chapter, "'dancing for a place in society': Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*," I examine the way that Campbell works both to construct and to dismantle Native identities in *Halfbreed* in order to nest the autobiographical self in a complex group identity, what she calls "my people," by the end of the text. Imagining the possibilities and pitfalls of different forms of citizenship for her people, she moves toward the rejection of national belonging in favour of local community allegiances. The texts by Chong and Marlatt, discussed in Chapters One and Two, repeatedly represent the autobiographical self as Canadian, and Canada, however ambiguously, as a kind of shimmering object of desire. In *Halfbreed*, on the other hand, it is not through a kind of national identification that the autobiographical "I" imagines herself as entering a better, more equal, or race-free world. In part, I argue, this difficult relation with nation derives from the way the Métis become an unacknowledged shadow of Indianness in debates about the role of Indians in Canada following the failure of the White Paper in 1969. While Campbell represents her life in ambiguous relationship to a country she can neither embrace nor entirely reject, a number of readings of *Halfbreed* imagine the autobiographical "I" in ways that see her fitting seamlessly into an inclusive Canadian nation. In these readings, the central figure's body is often read as quintessentially Canadian, implicitly providing supposed proof that Canada is ultimately a place where everyone can belong. Thus *Halfbreed* is used to buttress a view of nation that, I would argue, Campbell largely sets out to contest.

In "Where Are You *Really* From?" Black Canadian historian Adrienne Shadd provides one example of an implicit, if not always so clearly articulated, link between embodiment and ideas of nation: "As one South Asian man asked me after I told him I was Canadian, 'But what about your hair?' 'I didn't tell you I was a white Canadian!' I responded" (11). In this encounter, "Canadian" is understood in bodily terms in ways that suggest Shadd is not Canadian - or if she is, she is somehow wrongly embodied. Although this example is a straightforward one, in this dissertation I explore a range of ways in which bodies interrupt, challenge, or at times reinscribe hegemonic notions of Canadianness. While the relationships among scripts of self, national identities, and embodiment are both fluid and changing, this dissertation argues that some bodies are expelled from ideas of nation, even while these bodies are necessary for the construction of national identities. Discourses of national identity in Canada do not always adequately take into account the complex effects of embodiment on both individual and group identities, the ways in which embodied lives move beyond, and sometimes call into question, various national scripts. This dissertation examines how dominant discourses of nation work to shape representations of self in three Canadian women's autobiographies, in ways that leave the autobiographical "I" with a sense of improper embodiment: a sense that her body, and the bodies of others through whom she defines her self, do not fit, or fit only uneasily into the scripts of identity they work to play out. At the same time, I suggest that these texts ultimately call into question the dominant national discourses they simultaneously contest and reinscribe. Dominant discourses of national inclusiveness often implicitly define selves in ways that expel from ideas of nation the bodies, lives, and communities represented in the three autobiographies in this study. Although I do not say that the lives portrayed in these texts are representative of other Canadian women's lives, I do argue that these autobiographers all have something important to say about dominant national discourses, scripts of self, and embodied identities. All three autobiographers call into question, in various ways, discourses of national inclusiveness that gloss over thorny and painful issues of embodiment. Through their autobiographies, these writers underline just how central embodiment is in constructions of individual, collective, and national identities.

CHAPTER ONE

"The Work of Citizenship": Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*

> A man's voice woke her. "Is she asleep?" . . . . She had a sickening feeling that he was yet another of her mother's secret friends. . . .
>
> Hing made sure she was absolutely still. But the next thing she knew they had climbed into bed beside her, and he was on top of her mother. Hing's arm was pinned under them. . . . It seemed like an eternity that she was in agony, but she was too terrified to try to free herself. It came to her that her mother was no better than the waitress "Wild-Snake Jun". . . .
>
> If Hing didn't know right from wrong of what she saw of her mother's encounters with men, her gambling and drinking ways, she did know she didn't like it. The pain of such knowledge revealed itself in her own ailments. She developed recurring stomach cramps, she'd get hiccups often, and she suffered from daily nose bleeds, sometimes severe enough to stain her dress front. Her hair started to thin. But the worse was the eczema on her legs, which she scratched until they were raw and infected.
>
> Denise Chong, *The Concubine's Children* (108-109)

For Hing, a daughter growing up in Vancouver's early Chinatown in Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, the body is a site of intense pain and suffering, a source of pervasive yet confused feelings of shame, fear, guilt, and regret. Although as a child she cannot quite understand or articulate what it is about her mother's ways that she finds so distressing, the pain arises in part from her belief that her mother, May-ying, has deliberately chosen the cramped and claustrophobic life the two share at the bottom of the social scale in a beleaguered Chinese community in Canada. As the quotation at the beginning of this chapter graphically suggests, Hing repeatedly finds herself both trapped and displaced by the men in May-ying's life; pinned down, she is at the same time left frightened and alone. Hing's eczema, exacerbated by the repeated beatings she receives, is a particularly painful reminder of the only physical contact she shares with her mother: May-ying beats her daughter regularly on her legs in order to enforce self-discipline, since she believes that no permanent damage can be done to this part of a child's body (106). If the pain Hing experiences reveals itself in symptoms that appear on her own body, the trouble begins with her attempts to make sense of her mother's seemingly incomprehensible bodily practices, her ways of using and abusing her own and her daughter's body. These practices, along with the discourses that circulate around them, are a painful text that Hing, as a young child, cannot decipher. She does not understand the gossip she overhears about her mother: when one woman says that "May-ying has holes cut out of her bloomers," Hing simply feels hurt, angry, and confused (108). She does not know what to think when she peers under a set of curtains and sees her mother in a man's lap, since her mother never displays her affection (95). And when she cleans the chamber pot filled with her mother's vomit, Hing sees only evidence of her mother's frail body rather than signs of her mother's constant drinking (95). As she grows older, Hing begins to read her mother's bodily practices differently. By the age of eleven, she is convinced that she is "trapped on a treadmill of her mother's making" (128), and for Hing, this treadmill is at least partially caused by what Hing sees as May-ying's improper policing of her own body. While May-ying demands utter obedience from Hing, disciplining her body with a stick and later controlling her sexuality by forbidding contact with young men, she does not follow her own strict rules of conduct. For the adolescent Hing, her mother's bodily practices come to signify her mother's hypocrisy, her moral laxity, and her betrayal of both her daughter and herself. As Hing sees it, these bodily practices are a key source of the pain that she feels as a child, a pain she carries with her throughout adolescence and into her adult life.

According to the autobiographical narrator of *The Concubine's Children*, Hing's stories of a painful childhood motivated her daughter, Denise, to investigate family history and to ask why everything went so wrong for Denise's mother, Hing, and her grandmother, May-ying. Constructing a three-generation autobiographical saga from oral and written community histories, public archives, relatives' stories, old photographs, and fragments of her mother's memories, Denise Chong returns to conflicts between her mother and her grandmother in order to think through a complex and difficult legacy of mothering handed down from grandmother to mother to daughter. Unlike Hing's stories that emphasize the private and individual nature of her conflicts with her mother, and unlike the family photos that Hing scissors away from their backgrounds in order to stave off painful memories, in *The Concubine's Children* Chong insists on making connections between the seemingly private bodily experiences of May-ying and Hing and the larger social histories of Canada's broken Chinese families and beleaguered Chinatown communities. While Hing's painful stories stress a legacy of individual failures and a burning, though often unspoken sense of personal and collective shame, Chong refuses to take sides against either her mother or her grandmother or to blame them for their misfortunes. Instead of assigning blame, the author examines the larger social and economic inequities that shape the troubled and painful relationship between Hing and May-ying. In this text, the ideological conflicts between Hing and May-ying, and the larger social struggles these conflicts participate in, are inscribed on the body: what they eat, what they wear, how they use their bodies, the illnesses they suffer, the racialized meanings their bodies take on, and the gender roles they perform become part of a struggle to determine both individual and group identities. The text works to valorize Hing's decision to cut herself off from her alcoholic and often abusive mother in order to protect herself and her own family. At the same time, it works to revalue May-ying by reconsidering the crucial role of her labour for herself, her family, and her community. Denying neither the bodily pain in Hing's childhood nor the loneliness and despair in May-ying's life, the text strives to lift the burden of shame and failure suggested by Hing's stories of her past.

The value of May-ying's labouring body is most strongly established in relief in *The Concubine's Children*, through contrasts with various other bodies, particularly those of relatives who remained behind in China. In this chapter, I argue that it is partly through disassociating these bodies from one another that Chong establishes May-ying as the pioneering Canadian ancestor who gave the gift of Canada to her family. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong makes use of particular multicultural discourses in order to make a space for her grandmother, both within her own family's stories and within the dominant narrative of inclusive Canadian nationhood. At the same time, her autobiographical text seriously calls such discourses into question by showing the bodily displacements and painful elisions necessary to maintain the fiction of national inclusiveness.

Contexts

Before I turn to the ways in which particular social struggles and ideological conflicts are inscribed on the bodies of Hing and May-ying, it will be helpful first to consider the nature of some of these larger struggles. In this section, I will examine two distinct social contexts that shape the relationship between mother and daughter in *The Concubine's Children*. The first context is one that Chong explicitly focusses on in the text, the shifting social circumstances and economic hardships facing a number of Chinese Canadians both before May-ying's immigration to Canada in the early 1920s and during the decades following. Although Hing and May-ying find themselves at odds throughout most of their lives, the major conflicts and tensions between them arise partly because of the similar difficulties they face. Both repeatedly find that their lives as mother and daughter are shaped by a lack of adequate financial resources, a need to provide for a multiply-fractured extended family, and a desire both to unite and, paradoxically, to escape from a family whose members are divided physically, economically, and culturally from one another. In *The Concubine's Children*, these difficulties are explicitly connected with at least three historical and material forces: first, with decades of poverty and political turmoil in China, conditions that encourage Chong's ancestors to immigrate in the first place and that later leave the Chinese half of the family dependent on their Western relatives for financial support; second, with Canadian laws and practices that limit Chinese immigration to Canada and that restrict the growth of the Chinese Canadian community; and third, with class and gender hierarchies within Vancouver's early Chinatown, a situation that ensures only a marginal economic and social position for teahouse waitresses such as May-ying. These social and economic inequities place myriad, often contradictory pressures on both Hing and May-ying, exacerbating the painful conflicts between them.

If the first social context centres on a community history represented within the text, the second involves contemporary Canadian struggles over the values, ideals, and practices of an officially-instituted multiculturalism.[1] Although multicultural ideology, officially entrenched in the 1982 Constitution Act and later in the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, celebrates ethnic and racial diversity in Canada, as writers such as Marlene Nourbese Philip, Smaro Kamboureli, Robert F. Harney, Rosemary Brown, and Dawn Thompson have argued, this celebration is sometimes achieved only at a cost to those considered "multicultural," ethnically- and racially-marked Canadians.[2] Traces of this cost can be found in *The Concubine's Children*. Within current discourses of Canadian multiculturalism, my reading of *The Concubine's Children* suggests, diversity is celebrated, but only in certain forms, and differences are encouraged, but only up to a certain point. If the present multicultural context shapes the text in important but often subtle ways, it is a topic Chong addresses more directly in her April 1995 Clifford Sifton Lecture, a speech presented at Canada Place in Vancouver a year after the publication of *The Concubine's Children*. Chong's speech was the first in a series of lectures to be presented annually by Citizenship and Immigration Canada during National Citizenship week (Chong, "Work" 29). In this speech, Chong, an economist and former senior economic advisor to past prime minister Pierre Trudeau, shows that she is well aware of the racial and class inequities often elided in multicultural celebrations of difference. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong works both within and against dominant ideas of what constitutes Canada's multicultural diversity. By doing so, she begins to make room for new ways of thinking about both individual and group identities in Canadian contexts.

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[1] Fleras and Elliott point to the relative uniqueness of official Canadian multicultural policies: Canada passed the world's first national multiculturalism act in 1988 (2). As Reitz and Breton note, Canadian governments have adopted "multicultural" policies while American governments have not (9). However, as Reitz and Breton observe, what the practical effects of Canada's official commitment to multiculturalism might be is another question, one I will address further in this chapter.

Chinese Canadian Histories

Throughout *The Concubine's Children*, Chong includes descriptions of key events, ideas, institutions, and practices that shaped the lives of many Chinese Canadians during her grandmother's lifetime. In the second chapter, Chong focusses on some of the social and historical conditions that propelled Denise's grandfather, Chan Sam, to immigrate to Canada in 1913 and then to send for a concubine, May-ying, to join him eleven years later. According to Chong, Chan Sam's decision to leave China placed him in a long line of male peasants from the province of Kwangtung who sought to improve their lot through migration to various parts of the world (12, 18). Peasants were China's poor, Chong suggests, and what separated one peasant from another was owning a plot or two of land: in the nineteenth century, she notes, one in three peasants died landless. The poorest peasants rented land from city-dwelling landlords and had very little left from the harvest after paying rent, taxes, and interest on debts; their difficult economic situation left them with little to keep their families from starvation (15-16). Like his father who travelled to North America before him, Chan Sam hoped to earn enough money overseas to enable his family to escape a life of impoverishment (18). By working abroad, Chan Sam's father made ten times what he might have made had he remained in China; he was able to buy thirty *mau tin*, less than five acres of cultivated land, but enough to raise him from a poor peasant to what Chong refers to as a "middle-class" one (13, 16). However, even with the help of his father's *mau tin*, as a young man Chan Sam found that his precarious hold on subsistence began to slip: the overworked land had to feed too many mouths, and thus was rendered infertile despite Chan Sam's hard labour in the fields; political and economic chaos in the country meant that the only secure livelihood was banditry, and armed gangs roamed the land; and the death of the Empress Dowager in 1909, the rise of the Kuomintang in 1911, and the social upheaval that ensued meant that Chan Sam's long hours tending the soil could not still the threat of starvation (16-18).

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[2] Multiculturalism first became an official marker of Canadian identity in the early 1970s: "a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was unveiled by the Liberal government in Parliament in October 1971," Fleras and Elliott note (73). This earlier multicultural moment will be examined further in Chapter Three in my analysis of Campbell's 1973 autobiography *Halfbreed*. See Philip, "Why Multiculturalism Can't End Racism" in *Frontiers* 181-86; Kamboureli, "The Technology of Ethnicity"; Harney, "So Great a Heritage as Ours"; Brown, "Presentation"; and Thompson, "Technologies of Ethnicity."

In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong emphasizes the huge gulf between what Chinese peasants such as Chan Sam hoped and perhaps believed about the luxurious life of Chinese immigrants in North America – in the words of May-ying's Auntie, "'People living in *Gum San* [Gold Mountain] have wealth and riches; they have to push the gold from their feet to find the road'" (8) – and what Chan Sam and others like him actually find when they arrive in Canada. During one of the two trips home to China that he is able to make in his lifetime, Chan Sam himself perpetuates the myth of Gold Mountain in the murals he commissions for the walls of his house: one Hollywood scene depicts a couple in a roadster motoring by a mansion on a wide boulevard lined with palm trees (86, 253). This scene, of course, has little to do with the difficult life Chan Sam leads in order to keep this dream alive for himself and for his family. Because he is most concerned about supporting the family left behind in China, Chan Sam cuts his own expenses to a minimum, enduring a stripped-down life that would seem unliveable had he considered it anything but a temporary arrangement. Herded along with the other arriving Chinese to a packed and filthy "pigpen" when he first steps off Vancouver's pier in 1913, Chan Sam is fumigated with sulphur, then forced to spend three months in quarantine behind barred windows and under guard (11). This initial reception both prefigures Chan Sam's difficult life alone in Canada and underlines the hostility of the larger white community toward Chinese immigrants. After anti-Chinese immigration laws are stiffened in 1923 and Chan Sam realizes he may be separated from his family for years or even decades, he decides to send for a concubine to help assuage his loneliness, his worries, and his homesickness (22). In many ways, neither Chan Sam nor May-ying finds what the stories of Gold Mountain have led them to expect, or at least to hope for, when they arrive in Canada. Instead, they find a life of hard work, poor living conditions, and overt hostility from a larger white community anxious to contain Chinese immigrants within a small, unwanted segment of the city and to stem the tide of Chinese immigration to Canada.

In the second chapter, Chong outlines the major anti-Chinese laws that were enacted before May-ying's arrival in Canada as well as the corresponding anti-Chinese sentiments and racist depictions of the Chinese that both prompted and supported these laws. While a late-nineteenth-century emerging Canadian nation needed the cheap labour of Chinese men in railway construction, mining, farming, food canning, and other industries, the Chinese were not welcome as permanent immigrants to the country (Li, *Chinese* 18, 24-25; Chong, *Concubine's* 12). In the 1870s and 1880s special taxes for school, policing, employment, and other goods and services were levied against the Chinese; soon, Chong notes, the Chinese were barred from becoming naturalized citizens, from owning land, and from working on public works (*Concubine's* 12). Unlike other immigrants to Canada, the Chinese paid a head tax to enter the country, a fee that was raised from fifty dollars in 1885 to five hundred in 1904 (*Concubine's* 13).[3] In 1923, the flow of Chinese immigration to Canada virtually stopped with the Chinese Exclusion Act, an act that was not repealed until 1947. Tamara Adilman observes that the Exclusion Act particularly targeted women in order to limit reproduction and thus stall the growth of the Chinese community: no women were likely to be in the four categories of temporary settlers allowed by the bill (321-23).[4] Chinatowns, Chong notes, were denounced as dirty and disease-ridden, as centres of gambling and crime. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong describes how local editorial cartoons depicted Vancouver's as a congestion of rooming houses where lascivious Chinamen smoked opium, lay with Chinese prostitutes, fed on rats and enslaved white girls (14). Kay Anderson suggests that such racist depictions of the Chinese in Canada were fuelled by white fears of a growing Asian population: as one official put it in 1885, "If [the Chinese] came with their women they would come to settle and what with immigration and their extraordinary fecundity, would soon overrun the country" (qtd. in Anderson 59).

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[3] According to Kay J. Anderson, the amendment to the 1885 immigration act passed its third reading on 5 May 1903 (62, 261 n.96). Peter S. Li and Edgar Wickberg et al. also suggest that the change occurred in 1903 rather than in 1904 (Li, *Chinese* 30; Wickberg et al. 82).

[4] The four classes of immigrants allowed to enter Canada as temporary settlers were university students; merchants engaged in large scale trade; native borns returning to Canada after several years of education in China; and diplomatic personnel (Adilman 322).

These exclusionary laws, special taxes, and racist depictions, along with numerous other legislative and discursive controls restricting the rights of the Chinese in Canada, resulted in a Chinese Canadian community that was predominantly a married male bachelor society. Leaving their wives and families behind in China, men outnumbered women in Canada by twelve or fifteen to one through the 1920s and 1930s, an imbalance that steadily diminished in the post-war period but did not disappear, according to Peter S. Li, until around 1981 (*Chinese* 29-31, 62). The male-female ratios Chong cites are close to Li's estimates: according to Chong, the ratio of men to women fell from twenty-five to one to ten to one within a decade of Chan Sam's arrival. However, on the streets, Chong suggests, the ratio was dramatically higher: "decent" women, merchants' wives, rarely ventured beyond the walls of their family home (*Concubine's* 20). The male-female ratio in the Chinese Canadian community would change, Chong suggests, only with the birth of Canadian-born children (13, 15). Attempts to control the Chinese population were successful: as Li notes, following the Chinese Exclusion Act, the second generation of Chinese Canadians was significantly delayed (*Chinese* 68), and for over twenty years, the physical and economic growth of the community itself was halted. In response to early white hostilities and to the correspondingly poor living conditions many Chinese endured in Canada, Chong notes, the Chinese Benevolent Association of Victoria sent an urgent circular to Kwangtung province in 1913 warning prospective Chinese immigrants not to come to Canada; after 1923, according to Chong, many Chinese men already in Canada went home for good (*Concubine's* 14, 15).

The reproduction of the Chinese community was also controlled through ceaseless monitoring of Chinatown's density and its borders by white residents, merchants, and government officials. In 1919, according to Anderson, white merchants in Vancouver joined in with a petition to restrict Chinese settlement to one area of the city: the Chinese were assumed to have deleterious effects on hygiene and property values (Anderson 122-23). In the same year, the Vancouver city council's health committee denounced Chinatown as a breeding ground for disease, justifying numerous inspections of homes and properties, and many Chinese homes were threatened with destruction. Gambling and opium raids and arrests were also frequent (Anderson 129-30; Wickberg et al. 121-22). In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong underlines the white community's attempts to police both the borders and the interior of Chinatown by outlining incidents that determine the spaces her mother and grandmother are safely able to inhabit. After the Second World War, for example, when a Mr. Gee puts down a deposit on a house in Kitsilano, white neighbours amass a petition against him (*Concubine's* 157). Attempts to limit the Chinese to the borders of Chinatown persist in other ways as well: as a teenager, Hing goes with her friends to a municipal swimming pool that only recently changed its rules to allow Chinese into the pool (156). Even within the borders of Chinatown, not all spaces are safe, and many Chinese residents are subject to harassment. To the mortification of her daughter, May-ying is hauled away by the police in a raid on a local gambling club (147-48). Officially-sanctioned assaults on Chinese communities occurred as late as May 1960, Chong points out, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police staged simultaneous raids in Chinatowns across Canada, entering offices, businesses and private homes to seize evidence related to immigration fraud (221).

Chong's portrait of the harsh economic conditions and political upheavals in nineteenth- and early-twentieth century China that propelled male Chinese peasants to migrate, of the cruel reception such immigrants faced upon arrival in Canada, and of the social and economic inequities Chinese immigrants and their families continued to face throughout her grandmother's lifetime accords with similar descriptions in well-known historical accounts such as Peter S. Li's *The Chinese in Canada*, Edgar Wickberg et al.'s *From China to Canada*, and Paul Yee's *Saltwater City*. Chong's 1988 review of three books on the Chinese in Canada, including Yee's, suggests that she may have drawn on such works in preparation for the writing of her own text. In *The*

Concubine's Children, however, Chong focusses on the effects of such material and historical conditions on one family, showing how, for example, a combination of larger social movements and personal misfortunes thwarted every effort Chan Sam made to support his family in China. In her review article, Chong makes one critical comment concerning David Chuenyan Lai's *Chinatowns*. According to Chong, although Lai provides useful physical and demographical information about Canada's Chinatowns, the author's tour of these spaces is often devoid of people, missing a cast of characters who live there ("Chinatown" 23). This remark suggests by contrast one of the principle features of *The Concubine's Children*, the attempt to fill in the gap between private lives and public histories by showing how larger social struggles intimately affect the private lives of ordinary people such as her grandfather, Chan Sam, her grandmother, May-ying, and her mother, Hing.

Perhaps the most important difference between the histories Chong's text echoes and her own representation of the forces shaping early Chinatowns, however, is the focus on women in *The Concubine's Children*. As Tamara Adilman points out, in the study of Chinese Canadians in general, women have largely been ignored – treated only as an afterthought, or as a demographic statistic (309). In the introduction to the recently published oral history book project entitled *Jin Guo* – according to May Yee, the first book of its kind to be published on Chinese women in Canada (Yee 28) – the Women's Book Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council suggests that one of the reasons for this neglect is demographic: because men vastly outnumbered women in Canada's Chinese community, more attention has been paid to their history (Sugiman 11). According to Adilman, although their numbers remained small well into the 1950s, Chinese women were economically indispensable to the settlement of the Chinese (331). From the earliest days of settlement, women's responsibilities included food preparation, cleaning, childbearing, child rearing, and the manufacture of clothing; women also worked in family-owned or other businesses and earned money doing home sewing or laundry (Adilman 309). Women's labour was important to the community: when Chinese women labourers were barred from entering Canada in 1922, Adilman notes, members of the Chinese community went to great lengths to circumvent the law (319-20). The work performed by Chinese women, Adilman suggests, "enabled the men they worked for, or with, to survive and succeed economically" (331). Moreover, what the editors of *Engendering China* suggest about the importance of women to the study of China applies to Chinese Canadian history as well: "adding women to the social and historical picture, and highlighting gender as a category of analysis, changes the whole. China viewed through the lens of gender is not just more inclusive; it is different" (Gilmartin et al. 2). According to Gilmartin et al., a focus on women and gender in Chinese history and culture ultimately "revises the most basic categories through which we strive to apprehend Chinese social relations, institutions, and cultural productions" (Gilmartin et al. 2). Without an analysis of gender, it is difficult to examine the impact of racist legislation on Canada's Chinese communities, since Canadian laws and practices critically altered not only the gender balance but also the gender dynamics within these communities. Given the small numbers of women in the community, for example, what kind of power could be gained by performing particular gendered roles, ones reinforced by social norms or by community needs in a hostile climate? What might be some of the costs if a woman refused to follow her gendered script? Chong explores such questions in *The Concubine's Children*.

Although Chong describes the conditions that precipitated Chan Sam's move in terms that are familiar to readers of Chinese Canadian histories, then, she focusses on the impact this move has on the women in the family, and particularly on the concubine Chan Sam sends for in 1924. The second chapter largely focusses on the history of Chan Sam's move and on the difficult life Chan Sam finds when he arrives in Canada. However, the chapter begins and ends with May-ying. It begins with her reluctant departure to join her husband-to-be in Canada, a move that effectively places her life in the hands of a stranger overseas, a decision made not by May-ying herself but by the mistress who owns her (5). It ends (and the next chapter begins) with the unfortunate situation she is faced with upon arrival: May-ying discovers that her new husband is a poor man who could not afford to pay her way to Canada; she is forced to work as a teahouse waitress, a job that brands her a "loose" woman for whom the usual propriety is unnecessary, a woman subject to the catcalls of lonely bachelors whenever she walks down the street (25-27). The emphasis on women's lives evident in the shape of the second chapter is reinforced in other ways as well. For example, Chong makes a number of important changes in the structure and language of the text from its beginnings as a short story published first in *Saturday Night* and later in a collection entitled *Many-Mouthed Birds* to its final book-length form. Small changes in wording underline the focus on her grandmother's story: instead of referring to a coat that Chan Sam sent the family overseas, for example, as the short story version does, Chong emphasizes in *The Concubine's Children* that *May-ying* gave her husband this coat to send ("Concubine's" 59; *Concubine's* 3). More significantly, Chong shifts the emphasis away from the focus on men's lives by departing from chronology. Instead of beginning with her grandfather's arrival in Canada, as she does in the shorter version ("Concubine's" 61), she moves this earlier history to the second chapter of *The Concubine's Children*; the first chapter opens with a scene focussing on her grandmother's third pregnancy. By beginning the story with the birth of a third, unwanted daughter, Chong emphasizes women's stories and underlines from the beginning the struggles and tensions between May-ying and her third daughter, Hing.

May-ying works to create social acceptance for her conflicting roles as a teahouse waitress and a mother, a task complicated by the ways in which her productive and reproductive labours are repeatedly stripped from her. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong partly blames a patriarchal Chinese family structure for stripping May-ying of her own income and for questioning

May-ying's right to raise her own children, children who are taken away from her both literally and metaphorically. Around the turn of the century, according to Paul Yee, Chinese merchants often brought secondary wives to Canada, leaving the first at home in China to manage family affairs. "In China it was socially acceptable and status-enhancing to have more than one wife," Yee notes. "The first wife retained primacy and authority in the family; the second was acquired to produce additional male heirs" (40). Although May-ying's husband is not a wealthy man, like the merchants Yee refers to in *Saltwater City*, Chan Sam has two wives; moreover, it is the first wife, the one left at home in China, who is considered the official wife and mother.[5] All of Chan Sam's love, attention, and loyalties belong officially to his At-home Wife, Huangbo (cf.22). Significantly, all that is produced by May-ying's labours ultimately belongs to Chan Sam and thus to the At-home Wife as well – including May-ying's biological children. Although they are Canadian-born, May-ying's two eldest daughters are raised by Huangbo in China, and it is only the third daughter and later, an adopted son that the concubine is able to keep with her in Canada. May-ying is valued for her economic productivity as a waitress and her biological productivity as a potential producer of sons for the official couple, Chan Sam and Huangbo, whose legitimacy is underlined by the giant portrait of them that hangs in the house that Chan Sam built for his family in China (85). In contrast, not a single photo of Chan Sam with May-ying exists (4).

In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong is critical of a patriarchal Chinese family structure in which the concubine, May-ying, ranks the lowest of all (98). While Chan Sam feels a sense of duty toward his daughter Hing, his relationship with May-ying mainly involves attempts to assert his authority. Chan Sam berates May-ying for entering a gambling den, then drags her kicking and screaming away from the ears of neighbours (63-64). When he returns from his trip to China, he moves the family from Nanaimo back to Vancouver, away from the territory that is more May-ying's than his (95-96). Even after May-ying leaves him, Chan Sam believes she is still his concubine and not free to act without his consent (124; cf. 100-101). In the short story version, Chong presents an even more extreme portrait of Chan Sam's patriarchal tyranny and oppressiveness. In this shorter version, Chan Sam is a "hateful" husband ("Concubine's" 63). In one telling detail, Chan Sam keeps a hunting knife under his side of the mattress in order to keep May-ying from running away, and it is through this threat that their first two daughters are produced (63). This detail is omitted in the longer version. Similarly, Chan Sam's expression in an old photograph is interpreted differently in the two works: in the short piece, his jaw is "set, hinting at the temperament that supposedly made Grandmother leave him" (60); in *The Concubine's Children*, this portrait has "a melancholic air," and his jaw is "set with age and worry" (4). Chong softens the harsh criticism of her grandfather by shifting the emphasis in her description of why May-ying runs away. In the first version, it is to escape the cruelty and exploitation she suffers at Chan Sam's hands (63); in the second, Chong hints that May-ying leaves her husband and three-month-old baby because Hing is not the son the concubine expected or hoped for (49-51). By toning down her critique of Chan Sam, Chong continues to set May-ying's life in the context of a patriarchal family while at the same time shifting the emphasis to the relationship between Hing and May-ying.

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[5] Chong refers to her grandmother, Chan Sam's second wife, as a "concubine" both in the title and throughout *The Concubine's Children*. The choice of terms is interesting: while May-ying may not have been officially married, she was expected to produce male heirs. According to Paul Yee, "Although the terms were used interchangeably by Westerners, secondary wives were not concubines, who had no reproductive duties and were not officially married" (40). Since Chong wrote a review of Yee's book, I assume that she chose the term "concubine" deliberately, partly, perhaps, because of its exotic appeal for a Western audience. I will return to the idea of exoticism in the final section of this chapter.

Whether she focusses on the control Chan Sam exerts over May-ying or on May-ying's need to produce sons in order to elevate her status in the family, Chong emphasizes the ways in which a patriarchal family structure puts pressure on the lives of May-ying and Hing, often setting mother and daughter against each other. May-ying is so convinced that a son would improve her life, for example, that she dresses her young daughter in boy's clothing: "I'm going to change you into a boy!" May-ying declares. May-ying's disappointment in her daughter is made visible through the boy's clothing and boy's haircut Hing is forced to wear, and the child is left terrified and confused (90-91). Although the oppressiveness of Hing's family is extreme, Chong's reference to "*the* Confucian family" (98; emphasis added) might suggest an implicit assertion that there is a single type of Chinese family, and that this family structure is universally oppressive and unchanging over time. However, in *The Concubine's Children* Chong is careful to point out both the range and the changing nature of family relationships within Canada's Chinese community, noting the shift in traditional marriage customs and child rearing during Hing's childhood, for example (106, 124). Unfortunately, even these shifts become painful for Hing, since from Hing's perspective, her mother seems unreasonably unwilling or unable to change her traditional ways.

Instead of relying on an essential Chineseness to explain such family structures, Chong shows how the gender inequities in May-ying's family are determined to a great extent by larger historical and economic forces. Sold as a concubine a year after the Chinese Exclusion Act is enforced, May-ying is under contract to work as a teahouse waitress until she has paid off what it cost to bring her to Canada; the false birth certificate, bride price, and fees of middlemen add up to over two thousand dollars (23-26). Once this debt is paid, a task that takes her two years, she must continue working in order to support the family left at home in China, especially since her husband's wages are meagre. "At Chan Sam's mill," Chong writes, "the Chinese were third on the pay scale behind whites and Hindus, earning a fraction of their pay" (19).[6] In a way, May-ying's labour is highly valued: Chan Sam refers repeatedly to her as "an asset," "a good investment" (31, 57, 89), since her wages belong to him. But it is not simply Chinese traditions that shape this economic relationship. The shortage of women in Chinatown combined with lower wages for male Chinese labourers, Chong suggests, reinforces a patriarchal family structure. Like other Chinese men in this text, Chan Sam tightens his grip on May-ying because she makes more money than he does: "No matter that a waitress didn't like the work or the life that came with it, the men to whom they belonged liked the money too much" (29). A peasant and a labourer, Chan Sam seeks the status he is denied both within a class-conscious Chinatown and within a larger racist community when he returns to visit his family in China. Unable to earn enough money to provide the status he lacks, Chan Sam relies on May-ying's waitressing wages to finance a building project for his family in China, a project for which he takes credit. Partly because of the difficult life Chan Sam leads, then, May-ying's wages are appropriated while the work that goes into her earnings is erased.

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[6] Howard Palmer notes that around the turn of the century, East Indian immigrants to Canada were dubbed "Hindoos," despite the fact that most were Sikhs (86).

If May-ying's labour, necessary not only to strengthen Chan Sam's declining sense of self-worth but also to ensure the survival of the family, is both valued and yet erased, her work as a teahouse waitress also becomes a liability for her by threatening her access to motherhood. Caught in the conflicting duties of a mother, a waitress, and a wife, May-ying is plagued by what people around her say and think, that waitresses make "unsuitable mothers" (35-36; cf. 29, 104). In Chinatown of the 1920s, Chong suggests, waitresses were considered to be almost the same as prostitutes, women who wooed men to spend money (27). According to both Tamara Adilman and Paul Yee, Chinese women who worked as teahouse waitresses in the 1920s and 1930s were not considered respectable. As one female oral history respondent in Adilman's study puts it, "Some were prostitutes; some weren't. . . . They were bad because they were there especially to cater to the whims of men. . . . Whether they were totally prostitutes or just earning a living working as a waitress it makes no difference at that time" (320). In Yee's *Saltwater City*, a male respondent's description of Chinese women brought over to Canada from Hong Kong in the 1930s suggests a similar conflation of "waitress" and "whore": "The women lived with these 'husbands,' but they had been brought over to work, as waitresses and as whores. . . . The waitresses didn't have to go with everyone, they could pick and choose only the good-looking men to go with. Of course, they had to give part of their earnings to their owners" (95, 98). If the respondent in Yee's text suggests that such women were brought over primarily because of their potential to make money, Adilman's study shows that this economic role itself left women such as May-ying vulnerable to social disapprobation and contempt.

The typecasting of teahouse waitresses as somehow morally tainted echoes white stereotypes of the Chinese that circulated at the time, stereotypes depicting the Chinese as a vice-ridden and degraded race. Chong hints at this connection by placing her account of the dominant view of teahouse waitresses as "loose" in the chapter following her description of white stereotypes of the Chinese as a race "steeped in moral depravity" (27, 12). To some extent, then, within Chinatown itself, it is women like May-ying who carry the burden of these racist ideologies, since they are treated as morally suspect. As Chong points out, the shortage of female labour in Chinatown was worsened by a Vancouver city bylaw forbidding white women to work in Chinatown restaurants (26-27). In the eyes of white lawmakers and law enforcers, Kay Anderson explains, Vancouver's Chinatown was considered to be "a morally retrograde prostitution base where white women were lured as slaves" (92). According to Anderson, laws such as the Women and Girls Protection Act, passed by the British Columbia legislature in 1919, appealed to lurking fears and fantasies about the wickedness of "inter-racial" sexual union (159).[7]

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[7] The "protection" of white women is also connected with the public hysteria about white slavery that started in England around 1885 and later spread to North America. As Judith R. Walkowitz notes, W.T. Stead's influential 1885 newspaper exposé of the traffic in girls in London's vice emporiums, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," "documented in lurid detail

Such laws also worked to stigmatize women such as May-ying who worked in Chinatown teahouses. Within Chinatown, Chinese merchants reinforced this construction of teahouse waitresses as women who were not respectable by keeping their wives and daughters out of such establishments: "Certainly no merchant would allow his wife or daughter to be a *kay-toi-neu* [teahouse waitress]," Chong writes (26).

If Chong outlines numerous forces within Chinatown that served to marginalize teahouse waitresses such as May-ying, she also places such inequities in the context of larger Chinese and Canadian histories, practices, institutions, and discourses. The community history she presents, then, is a complex one, involving economic hardships that prompted peasants such as Chan Sam to leave China in the first place, overt hostilities from a white community anxious to keep Canada white and to stem the flow of Chinese immigration to Canada, and gender and class antagonisms within the Chinese Canadian community itself. Amid racist depictions of the Chinese, to borrow Rachel C. Lee's words, "as less evolved, as a mass of undifferentiated difference, as unclean, and

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how poor 'daughters of the people' were 'snared, trapped, and outraged, either when under the influence of drugs or after a prolonged struggle in a locked room,'" in order to be recruited for the streets (Walkowitz 81, 83). In a meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada shortly after the turn of the century, Mrs. Thompson notes, "Generally when we speak or think upon the subject of Purity, our first thought is the 'Social Evil,' or the White Slave Traffic. In this Province there are about 3,000 *known* fallen women, and to one fallen woman there are ten fallen men at the very least. . . . Impurity is the cause of nine-tenths of our divorces and our domestic troubles to-day" (qtd. in Spofford 238-39). According to John McLaren, Canadians demonstrated the greatest sense of unease about prostitution and its actual and imagined effects on society in the first two decades of this century. "Both the moral and physical health of the nation were considered to be in serious jeopardy," McLaren writes. "For the most pessimistic, racial degeneration and perhaps suicide seemed to loom ominously ahead" (329). If Stead's "Maiden Tribute" criticized the "vile aristocracy" for seducing innocent working-class white girls in England, in Canada the perceived threat involved immigrants who did not seem to share the values of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Canadians (Walkowitz 87, 94; McLaren 329). The notion that the virtue of working-class white women was endangered in restaurants owned and operated by Chinese men allowed for the inspection and control of these "foreign" spaces as well as for the policing of white women's bodies, a policing justified through the rhetoric of "protecting" them. I am indebted to Jo-Ann Wallace for pointing out the connection to the white slavery panic here.

finally, as unknowable" (Lee 249), the élite merchants of the Chinese Canadian community sought to distance themselves from the least privileged in the community by regulating the lives of their own wives and daughters, leaving teahouse waitresses such as May-ying to bear the brunt of both racist and misogynist stereotypes.

Multiculturalism and the Management of Diversity

In *Multiculturalism in Canada*, Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott claim that the doctrine of multiculturalism is widely recognized as Canada's outstanding contribution to the field of race and ethnic relations. As a method of managing ethnoracial diversity in Canada, Fleuras and Eliot suggest, multiculturalism has been praised as "bold and unprecedented," "nothing short of enlightened when stacked up against a global 'norm'" (1-2). Praise for Canada's tolerance of diversity is commonplace. The editors of one Canadian sociology textbook suggest that the many ethnic groups in Canada – the Jews, Ukrainians, Italians, Chinese, and dozens of others – "are being helped and encouraged to avoid assimilation in a way that is absent in the United States" (Curtis and Tepperman 5). In her introduction to *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*, literary critic Linda Hutcheon underlines multiculturalism's potential, albeit not yet fully realized, to become "an innovative model for civic tolerance and the acceptance of diversity" (15). In a 1976 essay, John Munro, then Minister of Multiculturalism, called multiculturalism "a rare government policy in a world in which ethnic divisions are often pronounced" ("Address" 128). More recently, on June 25, 1997, Queen Elizabeth lauded Canada as a nation whose diversity and tolerance have inspired the world. "Your province and your country are examples to the world that a people's diversity can be a source of strength," she said at a formal dinner hosted by Prime Minister Jean Chretien in St. John's. "You prove that peoples of different languages, cultures and ideas can live together in peace, equality and mutual respect" (qtd. in Hamilton A3).

As Howard Palmer underlines in an essay published a few years after Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau first announced the official government policy of multiculturalism in 1971, the present multicultural moment cannot be understood without examining its multilayered history: "if we are to understand current attitudes," Palmer notes, "we need to understand their historical roots" (84). This section of the chapter will summarize some of the important points in this history. First, I will review some of the main strategies Canada has used in the twentieth century to manage diversity as waves of new immigrants entered Canada around the turn of the century, in the 1920s, after the Second World War, and finally since the late 1960s. I will show how multicultural discourses and practices borrow from earlier strategies of anglo-conformity, racial and ethnic segregation, assimilation, and "melting-pot" integration. These borrowings result in a multicultural discourse that paradoxically underlines and at the same time erases differences of race; that celebrates diversity and yet in some ways also strictly codifies notions of race and ethnicity; and finally, that works to erase racial and ethnic inequities both in the past and in the present. I will then turn to Chong's 1995 Clifford Sifton Lecture, showing how she places the story of her family both in the context of an immigration history shaped at the turn of the century by Canada's Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton and in the context of "Canadian citizenship," a discourse intimately connected with current notions of multicultural differences. This speech provides a useful lens through which to view Hing and May-ying's relationship in *The Concubine's Children*, a text and a relationship I will return to in the next section of this chapter.

As Fleras and Elliott outline, earlier styles of racial management in Canada involved government policy initiatives that supported dominant ideologies of assimilation, segregation, and integration toward immigrants and racial ethnic minorities (11, 59-66). Policies of assimilation, Fleras and Elliott note, sought to destroy diversity through a process of absorption and conformity; the cultural values of subordinate groups were disparaged as inferior, childish, threatening, irrelevant, and counterproductive to both minority and societal interests (61, 63). Until at least the end of the Second World War, according to scholars such as Jean Burnet, Howard Palmer, and Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, immigrants to English-speaking Canada were expected to assimilate into the mainstream by conforming to an essentially white, British ideal (Burnet 2; Palmer 81; Fleras and Elliott 60-61). At the same time, certain ethnically- or racially-marked immigrants who were perceived as unassimilable, as deviating too far from the mainstream – including blacks, Chinese, and East Indians, for example – were formally and forcibly separated from the dominant culture (Fleras and Elliott 62-63).

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, then, policies of assimilation went hand-in-hand with policies that separated ethnic and racial minorities from the mainstream, creating what Howard Palmer has called "a vicious circle of discrimination." According to Palmer, non-Anglo-Saxons were discriminated against because they were not assimilated, either culturally or socially, but one of the reasons they were not assimilated was because of discrimination against them (90). Although Palmer's remarks refer specifically to the period before the 1920s – anglo-conformism, he notes, was most pronounced during World War I as nationalism demanded unswerving loyalty and precipitated insistent hostility to "hyphenated Canadianism" (87) – policies of assimilation and segregation continued well beyond this period. As Fleras and Elliott note, for example, segregated schools for blacks remained in existence in Nova Scotia and Ontario until 1963 and 1964 respectively (62-63). Although China and Canada were allies during World War II and although Chinese communities in Canada supported the war effort through huge fund-raising drives and through military service, greatly increasing the status of the Chinese in Canada (Wickberg 188, 200), restrictions against Chinese immigration to Canada continued. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947; however, as Peter S. Li points out, the Chinese were then placed under the same restrictive conditions of admission as other Asians (*Chinese* 88). Although

Prime Minister Mackenzie King called for a revival of mass immigration to Canada in the same year the Exclusion Act was repealed, he advocated keeping out those "belonging to nationalities unlikely to assimilate" (qtd. in Harney 51, 54). "Large scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population," King stated in his 1947 speech, a change he believed most Canadians would see as undesirable (qtd. in Li, *Chinese* 88; Palmer 98). According to Li, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration continued to use ethnic and racial origins for classifying immigrants in its annual report until 1961, and it was not until 1962 that Chinese who had no relatives in Canada could apply, for the first time since the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act, as independent immigrants (*Chinese* 89, 91).

Although strategies of racial ethnic segregation and ideologies that stressed conformity to a white Anglo ideal continued into the second half of the twentieth century, by the 1960s, according to Fleras and Elliott, official government policy began to change (60). Instead of a one-way process of assimilation in which minorities were expected to conform to the culture and institutions of the mainstream, a two-way process of integration became the preferred policy principle. Under integration, Fleras and Elliott suggest, the best elements of both the majority and the minority culture were supposed to merge to form a new Canadian identity (60-62). However, ideologies of anglo-assimilation and melting pot integration did not simply succeed one another historically, with the new ideology completely displacing the older one. Although government policies may have started changing in the 1960s, for example, as Howard Palmer points out, ideas of "melting pot" integration first emerged much earlier, in the late 1920s (92). According to Palmer, three theories of assimilation have dominated twentieth century debate over immigration adjustment: anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and "cultural pluralism" or "multiculturalism." Although the relative popularity or influence of each has varied, he notes, all three views have been expressed throughout the twentieth-century debate over immigration (81).

Charting changes in attitudes toward pluralism against the backdrop of three main waves of immigration to Canada that occurred around the turn of the century, in the 1920s, and during the post-World War II era, Palmer shows how ideologies such as anglo-conformity or the melting pot vied for prominence at various times in Canadian history as politicians, immigration officials, political pressure groups, scholars, bishops, newspaper columnists, and others debated over which immigrants should be admitted to the country and what role particular groups should play in Canadian life. If voices advocating newer ideologies sometimes appeared very early, at the same time, older ideas often lingered or carried on into newer ideologies, so that the distinctions between older and newer ideas were not always clear. Following the second main wave of non-British and non-French immigrants to Canada in the 1920s, according to Palmer, many opinion leaders held to an earlier belief that Canada should be patterned exclusively on the British model and that immigrants who could not conform to Anglo-Canadian ideals should be excluded. However, during the late 1920s the idea of the melting pot developed greater prominence. While proponents of anglo-conformity maintained that some immigrants could not be assimilated, a new generation of social critics who wished to promote tolerance toward ethnic minorities suggested that assimilation was indeed occurring, but to a new Canadian type (Palmer 91-92). In some ways echoing the advocates of anglo-conformity, most of these social critics did not seriously question the desirability of assimilation; instead, these melting-pot advocates worked with new immigrants to hasten the assimilation process (92-93). Despite important differences between the two sets of beliefs, as Fleras and Elliott stress, ideologies of anglo-assimilation and "melting-pot" integration agree on one crucial point: both reject differences or push them to the margins; neither views diversity as a valuable resource (63). As Palmer puts it, advocates of anglo-conformity and the melting pot both believed that uniformity was necessary for national unity; they differed on what should provide the basis of that uniformity (93). Moreover, in the 1920s, Palmer notes, there was not always a clear distinction between anglo-conformity and the melting pot: the melting pot often turned out to be an Anglo-Saxon melting pot. As one prominent Edmonton historian wrote in 1924, for example, "There is enough Anglo-Saxon blood in Alberta to dilute the foreign blood and complete the process of assimilation to the mutual advantage of both elements" (qtd. in Palmer 93).

While Palmer outlines which ideologies were dominant at particular times – for Palmer, anglo-conformity was dominant from Confederation to the 1920s, melting-pot integration from the late 1920s until approximately the early 1960s, and multiculturalism during the 1960s and 1970s – he is also careful to point out the ways in which conflicting voices emerged to challenge dominant ideologies, even if the early proponents of newer ideas were not necessarily heeded. Although the depression witnessed the high point of discrimination against non-Anglo-Saxons, Palmer notes, it was during the 1930s that the earliest proponents of cultural pluralism began to be heard (94). However, writers such as John Gibbon, whose book *The Canadian Mosaic* traced the history of different ethnic groups of Canada and related their contributions to Canadian society, and Watson Kirkconnell, an English professor at the University of Manitoba who sympathetically portrayed the cultural background of the countries where immigrants originated, were "voices crying in the wilderness – a wilderness of discrimination and racism" (Palmer 95-96).

If ideologies of anglo-conformity and melting-pot integration both insisted on uniformity, cultural pluralism or "multiculturalism" as it has emerged from the early 1970s through the present seemed to promise something new. In contrast with these earlier ideologies, multiculturalism places cultural diversity at the centre of Canadian nation-building. As Fleras and Elliott observe, multiculturalism openly promotes diversity as a necessary, beneficial, and inescapable feature of Canadian society (63). According to the official doctrine of multiculturalism, racial and ethnic differences are positive qualities that not only enhance the collective well-being of the population, Fleras and Elliott claim, but also promote the unity, identity, and prosperity of the country as a whole (22). Writing a letter to the Calgary Herald partly to defend multiculturalism against conservative critics who claim that the policy is divisive, Manoly R. Lupul, professor emeritus at the University of Alberta, suggests that the sharing of cultural heritages within multiculturalism promotes unity: "Appreciation of the cultural aspects of a country's diverse peoples creates mutual respect and such respect, in the end, is what holds heterogeneous countries like Canada together" (Lupul A16). As Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism in 1979, John Munro likewise underlines the connection between ethnic diversity and national unity at the heart of multicultural policy: "I do not accept – and the policy specifically rejects – the view that because of our differences we have little in common. Rather, it is exactly because of our differences we have a great deal in common." He ends his speech on multicultural policy and its role in a national context with an emphasis on national unity: "We have as Canadians much more that unites us than divides us . . . " ("Multiculturalism" 13, 15).

With the introduction of multicultural policies, practices, and ideologies from the early 1970s onward, then, dominant discourses of Canadian nationalism shifted from an insistence on cultural uniformity toward an emphasis on national unity through diversity. Multiculturalism was still a relatively new concept when historian Howard Palmer examined its development in his 1976 article "Reluctant Hosts": for Palmer, the term "multiculturalism" itself was still "a recent word" (Palmer 82). By the 1980s, multiculturalism itself had had a longer history; moreover, the analytical tools scholars used to reflect on the now more distant genesis of multiculturalism had changed as well. In his 1986 article "Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building," for example, Canadian sociologist Raymond Breton draws on cultural theories by Pierre Bourdieu, Peter Berger and others to discuss not just the material but also the symbolic and cultural exchanges involved in multiculturalism – a topic Palmer, for the most part, does not address.

Breton outlines some of the discursive and cultural shifts that led to Pierre Trudeau's announcement of a new federal policy of multiculturalism in 1971. According to Breton, numerous social changes suggested that the climate was propitious for a change in the symbolic order (48). Emphasizing that institutions and their authorities control symbolic resources as well as material ones, dispensing recognition and honour as well as opportunities for meaningful social roles, Breton notes that social tensions develop when symbolically disadvantaged groups pressure for a redefinition of the character of public institutions. Inadequacies in the distribution of symbolic resources, and the alienation, resentment, and social tensions they bring about, undermine the legitimacy of public institutions, at times leading authorities to intervene (27-32). This process of change was accelerated in the decades following the Second World War, in Breton's view, precipitating the inauguration of official multiculturalism in Canada (32, 33). According to Breton, the increase in ethnic diversity in the population, the growing American presence that presented a new challenge for Canada's collective identity, the shift in identity away from England as the empire lost its status-giving properties, the considerable economic expansion Canada was undergoing, the increase in state intervention in social affairs, the rise of the women's movement, and other significant shifts all created the overall climate of social change out of which the official doctrine of multiculturalism arose (37-41).

The immediate motive, however, was the rise of the independence movement in Quebec and the government's initial response (Breton 48). When Prime Minister Lester Pearson set up the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the early 1960s to address the issue of French Canadian nationalism and to defuse the threat to Canadian unity and identity, many non-French, non-English Canadians were unwilling to let themselves be defined out of existence by "biculturalism" (Palmer 101-102; Fleras and Elliott 72). These so-called ethnic Canadians, Breton observes, were not primarily concerned with cultural maintenance. Instead, their concerns reflected status anxiety – the fear of being defined as second-class citizens, marginal to the identity system being redefined (Breton 49). As many scholars have noted, the protests of ethnic communities brought about a last-minute addition to the mandate of the Royal Commission, summed up in the title of the fourth volume added to the report, *The Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups*. In response to Book IV of the Royal Commission, in October, 1971, the federal government announced its multicultural policy (Breton 49; Burnet 2-3; Harney 66-67; Palmer 102). According to Robert Harney, the public policy of multiculturalism that has emerged since 1971 can be viewed in four different ways: as a "product of the postwar convergence of arriving nationalist DP intellectuals – Poles, Balts, and Ukrainians especially – and a failure of the will to assimilate on the part of Anglo-Canadian officials"[8]; as an "innovative and altruistic civic philosophy"; as a "device used by Anglophones to minimize the uniqueness of the French minority in Canada"; or as a "tactic of venial politicians to find . . . a way of controlling new ethnic and immigrant voting blocks" (65). In any case, Harney notes, all four narratives include the same three "mythic protagonists": the British, the French, and the "other ethnic groups" (65).

It is precisely the characterization of the British, the French, and the "other ethnic groups" as monolithic entities which together make up Canada's national identity as well as the unacknowledged ranking of these "mythic protagonists" within a vertical mosaic that writers such as Marlene Nourbese Philip, Rosemary Brown, Smaro Kamboureli, and others have called into question. According to African Carribean Canadian poet Marlene Nourbese Philip, for example, multiculturalism describes a configuration of power at the centre of which are the two cultures recognized by the constitution of Canada – the French and the English – and around which circumnavigate the lesser satellite cultures. In such a symbolic configuration, she notes, Native people are left entirely out of the picture (181). Moreover, Philip suggests that by pretending to be what it is not – a mechanism to equalize all cultures within Canada – multiculturalism works to obscure how thoroughly racism permeates Canadian society (181, 183). Similarly, sociologist Peter S. Li argues that the policy of multiculturalism perpetuates the inequities in a capitalist labour market by strengthening the belief that equality already exists (*Ethnic Inequality* 10). As University of Toronto sociologists Reitz and Breton report in *The Illusion of Difference: Realities of Ethnicity in Canada and the United States*, a poll conducted in 1986 found that 72 percent of Canadians believe that Canadians show more racial tolerance than Americans do (11), a belief that Reitz and Breton call into question. According to Peter S. Li and B. Singh Bolaria, multiculturalism furnishes Canadian society with a great hope without having to change the fundamental structures of society (qtd. in Li, *Ethnic Inequality* 9). Indeed, for historian Robert Harney, multicultural policy may serve to perpetuate the hegemony of the British as the elite of Canada by encouraging political loyalties on lines that cut across class. According to Harney, multiculturalism softens issues of immigrant exploitation by drawing attention away from class differences within ethnic groups and by representing the immigrant's situation primarily in terms of ethnic culture rather than in terms of law, power, and class (82), thus perpetuating the very inequities it purports to address.[9] Despite the celebration of diversity at the heart of Canada's multicultural policy, then, multiculturalism has the potential to work as a socially regressive force. As Fleras and Elliott remark, the multicultural ideal of "celebrating diversity" can serve either as a force for social change or as a means of reinforcing the prevailing distribution of power and resources within the status quo (53).

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[8] The term "DP" refers to "those who were in displaced-person camps" during the Second World War (Harney 57).

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[9] Harney's point about the neglect of issues of law, power, and class in discourses of multiculturalism is an important one; as I suggest in various ways throughout this chapter, Chong, an economist by training, takes up such material issues in relation to Chinese Canadian histories in *The Concubine's Children*. However, by setting aside the question of ethnic culture in immigrant histories, Harney risks eliding the complex role of "culture" in the production of social meanings, institutions, and practices. As Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, and other cultural theorists have argued, material forces and symbolic or cultural practices are complexly interconnected. In *The Concubine's Children*, painful cultural conflicts between the immigrant May-ying and her Chinese Canadian daughter Hing suggest that the field of culture is also a primary battleground, related in complex ways to the issues of law, power, and class that Harney addresses.

One of the most regressive possibilities of the multicultural vision of Canada as a nation made up of three "mythical protagonists" is that the lines drawn between these three groups can become frozen, so that instead of breaking down barriers of racism and discrimination, multiculturalism works to maintain current social inequities. In other words, divisions between racial and ethnic groups that result from complex historical developments are envisioned as a fixed, unchanging relation – "three mythic protagonists" – a triad that exists because of the distinct racial and ethnic characteristics of each group. Because these characteristics are imagined as innate and essential, the inequitable relations between groups become unchangeable and inevitable. Pointing to this problem over twenty-five years ago, Vancouver politician and social activist Rosemary Brown argued in her 1976 address that multiculturalism can become a regressive force if cultural groups are viewed as voting blocks; used this way, she suggests, "multiculturalism is an abuse of the cultural aspects of the concept and is really a disguised form of racism since it attempts to identify the political behaviour with ethnic or racial characteristics" (8). Noting how easy it is to exploit cultural differences, Brown maintains that it is a short step from admiring the native costumes of a particular ethnic group to assuming that they are culturally well-suited to menial labour (8). Canadian ethnic groups are not frozen, she insists; rather, there is a continual adaptation to Canadian and cultural forms (9). Echoing Rosemary Brown's argument seventeen years later, Smaro Kamboureli suggests that differences under multiculturalism become segregated instead of being allowed permeability and flow ("Of Black Angels" 146; Gunew and Yeatman xix). An English professor and feminist deconstructionist, Kamboureli relies on Jacques Derrida's paradoxical notion of the supplement to describe the situation of ethnics in Canada. For Derrida, as Jonathan Culler explains in *On Deconstruction*, the supplement is both an "inessential extra" and, at the same time, something added "in order to complete, to compensate for a lack in what was supposed to be complete in itself" (Culler 103). Significantly, these two meanings are linked: "in both meanings," Culler observes, "the supplement is presented as exterior, foreign to the 'essential' nature of that to which it is added . . . ." (103). Within the context of official Canadian multiculturalism, Kamboureli argues, ethnics become the supplement to our Canadian culture, the excess element in our otherwise bland identity, and a test of Canadian tolerance ("Of Black Angels" 145). According to Kamboureli, although official multiculturalism was offered as an acknowledgement of otherness, it pre-empts any attempt the foreigner might make at ceasing to be a foreigner. It appeases discrimination, but it does so by segregating difference (146).

If ideologies of anglo-conformism and melting-pot integration did not simply succeed one another historically, with a new ideology simply replacing the older one, the ideals and practices of multiculturalism likewise do not strictly depart from earlier, more overtly racist strategies for managing ethnoracial diversity. As Fleras and Elliott observe, multiculturalism draws upon earlier ideologies of segregation, assimilation, and integration in its attempts to forge a new way of dealing with diversity (63-64). Like the earlier ideology of segregation, according to Fleras and Elliott, multiculturalism promotes separatist tendencies; as with integration, multiculturalism is committed to incorporating minorities into the mainstream; finally, as with assimilation, multiculturalism perceives societal unity as contingent on primary allegiance to core values (64). Just what these "core values" are under multiculturalism and exactly who determines these values are troubling issues (cf. Fleras and Elliott 88-89). To what extent do these "core values" reflect the historical dominance of white Anglo Canadians? At what point does a given cultural practice become unacceptable, and who should decide? These core values may work to keep the "vertical mosaic," to borrow John Porter's well-known phrase, intact, meaning that minorities are incorporated into the mainstream in inequitable ways. The furor over the ruling allowing Sikh males to wear turbans as part of the R.C.M.P. uniform, for example, suggests that there are limits to acceptable diversity in Canada, even if these limits are always being contested (cf. Fleras and Elliott 141-43). As Robert F. Harney underlines, Book IV of the Royal Commission Report clearly set limits to acceptable diversity: while a celebration of pluralistic origin was encouraged, neither political nor linguistic pluralism would be possible, for example (71). As one of the authors of the report, Jean Burnet, suggested, multiculturalism cannot enable various peoples to transfer foreign cultures and languages as living wholes into a new place and time (qtd. in Harney 71 and in Palmer 105). Such a wholesale transmission of culture is of course impossible, as Manoly R. Lupul also notes, since assimilation is a daily phenomenon (A16). However, this impossibility begs the question: what exactly must an immigrant leave behind in order to fit into Canada's multicultural community?

Despite its troubling historical roots, Fleras and Elliott maintain that multiculturalism departs in a significant way from earlier ideologies both in terms of the degree of conformity that is upheld as necessary and in terms of the value that is placed on diversity (64). Multiculturalism departs from the earlier ideology of separatism, for example, because "differences under multiculturalism are voluntarily chosen and self-imposed" (64). However, scholars such as Smaro Kamboureli and Dawn Thompson would disagree. The 1988 Multiculturalism Act pledges to preserve and enhance the cultures of minority groups. According to Kamboureli, both projects are suspect: "preserving" ethnicity implies treating ethnicity as a museum case in which ethnic difference becomes a fixed symbol rather than something that is fluid and indeterminate, while "enhancing" ethnicity points to its commodification through an agency over which the ethnic subject might have little control ("Technology" 212-13). Kamboureli suggests that the act of legislating on ethnicity may signal a desire to curtail the phenomenon of disparity. Ethnicity is put under erasure, she notes, since it becomes a condition of commonality: what all Canadians have in common is ethnic difference, and only those elements of ethnic subjecthood that conform to "Canadianness" are stressed ("Technology" 208, 209, 211). Dawn Thompson extends Kamboureli's argument that the Multicultural Act functions as a "technology of ethnicity" by suggesting that Canadian multiculturalism as a whole functions in this way. Thompson suggests that multiculturalism produces and polices minority subjects through technologies such as immigration policies, census questions, and financial support of ethnic associations (51-52, 56). Such technologies, she notes, encourage ethnic-minority groups to focus on, and safeguard, their ethnic identities in ways that are not always in their interests (58). Drawing on Marlene Nourbese Philip's characterization of multiculturalism in Canada, Thompson suggests that the goal of multicultural policy has been to defuse, rather than to address directly, ethnic unrest, and thus to ensure the preservation of Canada with as little change as possible (55).[10]

The separatist tendencies evident in official multiculturalism, as I have noted, have their antecedents in early twentieth century ideologies of racial ethnic segregation and anglo-conformism. Moreover, as Kay Anderson's work suggests, these ideologies in turn have roots in nineteenth-century European ideas of race. In *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980*, Anderson argues that the perception of the "Chinese" in Canada as a "different" group is a cultural abstraction comparable to classifications of racial identities in South Africa, an abstraction that belongs to the beliefs and institutional practices of white European society. For Anderson, moreover, the perception of the Chinese as a "different" group has considerable material force: for example, she argues that Chinatowns stand to this day in large part as physical manifestations of that abstraction (8). Anderson traces this essentialist view of the Chinese to nineteenth-century theories of race that imagined cultural differences as fixed and unchangeable. According to nineteenth-century Social Darwinist theories of race, Anderson notes, history was a progression from barbarism to civilization. Many post-Darwinian social scientists adopted the view that although primitive peoples were intrinsically capable of evolving to civilization, in practice they would require an infinite time to do so. For all contemporary purposes, then, the races were considered immutable (42-43). "Races change slowly," as one commissioner put it after the 1885 royal commission on the Chinese question in British Columbia, "but the stationariness of the Chinese race seems phenomenal" (qtd. in Anderson 43). The nineteenth-century idea of race as an immutable and fundamentally determining characteristic, combined with the related post-Darwinian idea that different races were hierarchically ordered in terms of evolutionary development, clearly informs the ideologies of anglo-conformity and racial-ethnic segregation in the early twentieth century. Significantly, traces of these nineteenth-century beliefs can also be found in Canada's contemporary multicultural mosaic: in the separatist tendencies that Fleras and Elliott point to, in the cultural essentialism that Brown and Kamboureli criticize, and in the ethnic "pecking order" (to borrow Howard Palmer's term) that still exists in contemporary Canada.[11]

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[10] In "The Minority Circuit: Identity Politics and the Professionalization of Ethnic Activism," Vered Amit-Talai analyses how the defusion of ethnic unrest occurs in one particular segment of Canadian public life. According to Amit-Talai, a small, select set of high-profile ethnic activists in Montreal, numbering in the dozens rather than the hundreds, are repeatedly called upon in order to stage the resolution of repeated ethnic crises ranging from the death of unarmed civilians to the ritual rediscovery that ethnic minorities are inadequately represented in one branch or another of the public service (89, 98). Crises tend to be resolved by the proliferation of committees and inquiries, a proliferation that both encourages and is supported by the selectiveness of their membership (99). The fictional resolution of ethnic crises is in many ways convenient for all those involved: "Rather than deal with the various and contradictory views of the sometimes inarticulate, inaccessible, or just downright disinterested thousands who can be classified under the general rubric of ethnic minorities, the reporters, politicians and managers can interact instead with a few eloquent, well-educated, highly politicized professionals" (97). What is insidious about this "minority circuit," Amit-Talai notes, is its commoditization of ethnic identity for public viewing and the treatment of human beings as living mosaic icons (106).

Contemporary Canadian multiculturalism encompasses a diverse, often contradictory set of cultural practices, discourses, and institutions. Despite the fact that Canadian multiculturalism is often touted as a huge step forward in race and ethnic relations, according to one dominant multicultural myth, Canadian tolerance of diversity is a long-standing tradition. "Pluralism is nothing new in Canada," John Munro, then Minister of Multiculturalism, states. "This is a huge, diverse country. From the very beginning, its very nature has demanded a recognition of this diversity" ("Address" 121). For Munro, the policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism together "confirm the pluralist nature of the society we have been evolving – relatively peacefully and creatively – for more than a century in Canada" ("Multiculturalism" 13). According to Linda Hutcheon, it is a "historical fact that what we now call Canada has always been multicultural, that it has always negotiated the space between social tension and cultural richness" (3). Although numerous political speeches and scholarly articles assume that Canadians have always adopted the "mosaic" approach to cultural differences, as Palmer observes both in his title – "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century" – and throughout his article, "[m]uch of this rhetoric has simply been wishful thinking" (84). From Confederation until at least the 1920s, he notes, there were few proponents of either the melting pot or of cultural pluralism in Canada. At this time, according to Palmer, "there was virtually no thought given to the possibility that 'WASP' values might not be the apex of civilization which all men should strive for" (84, 85). When Clifford Sifton, who took over the Department of the Interior in 1896, worked to ease immigration restrictions, for example, he did so simply because farmers were needed to colonize the land in the drive to claim the West; and as Richard J.F. Day notes, not enough of them could be found in England alone (123). There was a clear hierarchy of immigrants, and Sifton attempted to appeal to "agriculturalists who were, if not Anglo-Saxon, at least European, and therefore second best" (123-24).

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[11] In "Multiculturalism: Representing a Canadian Institution," Audrey Kobayashi notes that the issue of "race relations" has recently become a priority within the Multiculturalism Directorate (221; cf. Breton 56-57). However, as Kobayashi underlines, this new emphasis on "race relations" – a euphemistic term that projects an image of racial harmony rather than one of structural inequality (Kobayashi 222) – still relies on an old model of "race":

> Nearly all government documents continue to treat "race" as an unproblematic category, naturally given rather than socially constructed. The objective, therefore, becomes that of overcoming discrimination, fostering equality *regardless* of "race." Such an objective only perpetuates the separation of human beings according to arbitrary phenotypical characteristics, instead of addressing the social processes by which races are created . . . . (Kobayashi 221)

In her reexamination of Chinese Canadian histories from the point of view of her mother and her grandmother, Chong both echoes and, at the same time, challenges two key ideas at the heart of dominant multicultural discourses in Canada: first, the idea that Canada is, and always has been, a land of equal opportunity and promise for all immigrants; and second, the idea that members of the same racial ethnic group share certain characteristics that are unchanging over time and that contribute positively to Canada's identity as a multicultural nation. The multicultural vision of Canada as a land of equal opportunity for immigrants whose ethnicity itself provides the raw material for Canada's national identity is aptly summarized in a 1979 speech by J.S.G. Cullen, then Minister of Manpower and Immigration:

> We have grown, prospered, and matured as a nation because people had the courage to leave their homelands and spin out their dreams and ambitions in this country. They brought with them their gifts of talent and hard work. In turn, we have given them the opportunity to be free and to prosper.
>
> Part of the reason for the success of immigrants to this country lies in the kind of society we are. Our nation has been built up and fortified by generations

> of immigrants from all over the world, and we do not consider any one ethnic group or race more important or desirable than any other. All the ethnic communities in Canada are seen as essential elements in our national personality . . . . (24)

The multicultural discourses reflected in Cullen's speech fuse liberal notions of freedom, prosperity, and equality with a vision of multi-ethnic harmony. The hard work and talents of all immigrants, Cullen implies, are equally valued and equally rewarded in a fair exchange of goods and services that takes place regardless of ethnic origins: immigrants worked hard, and so they prospered. Moreover, each immigrant group has something specific to add to Canada's "national personality" - all of which adds up to a unique Canadian national identity.

These multicultural discourses, reminiscent of what David Theo Goldberg has called "managed" or, borrowing the terms of the Chicago Cultural Studies Group, "corporate" multiculturalism because of their relative lack of concern with the redistribution of power or resources (7), rely on two specific kinds of erasures. First, they rely on the erasure of inequities *between* various multicultural groups. As John Porter first argued in his influential text *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), not all ethnic groups have equal access to power, status, education, income, occupation, social mobility, or other cultural and material resources, as discourses of multicultural equality might have us believe. Second, they rely on the erasure of differences *within* such groups. As Smaro Kamboureli and Rosemary Brown have suggested, contrary to dominant multicultural notions of race and ethnicity, racial ethnic groups are neither homogenous nor unchanging. Chong's representation of painful differences between her Chinese Canadian mother and her immigrant grandmother challenges dominant myths that "Chineseness" has just one meaning or that the Chinese Canadian community could ever be considered static or homogeneous. Moreover, Chong's focus on both global and local contexts that shape the mother-daughter relationship complicates generic, present-oriented models of multicultural difference by drawing attention to some of the complex histories shaping Canada's contemporary racial and ethnic diversity.

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Although Denise Chong's 1995 Clifford Sifton lecture does not mention the word "multiculturalism" even once, all of the key ingredients that together form the essential features of contemporary Canadian multiculturalism are highlighted in her text. As the editors' introduction to the transcript of her speech in *Optimum: The Journal of Public Sector Management* points out, questions of national unity, of historical immigration policies, and of managing cultural diversity in Canada are central issues either in the lecture series in general or in Chong's speech in particular (Chong, "Work" 29). Pulling out another central thread in Chong's text, the editors of *Optimum* give Chong's lecture the title "The Work of Citizenship." In addition to the issues underlined in the editors' introduction, Chong's focus on citizenship in this retelling of her family's story implicitly connects her talk with multicultural issues. As Fleras and Elliott observe, in recent years government discourse on multiculturalism has been couched increasingly in terms of citizenship (79). Multiculturalism and citizenship are aligned under a single federal department, Fleras and Elliott note, and attention is focussed on issues such as what it means to be a Canadian citizen, what the rights and duties of citizenship are in a multicultural society, and how ethnocultural differences and human rights are essential ingredients of Canadian citizenship (79). Without using the word "multiculturalism," these are precisely the kinds of issues that Chong addresses in her 1995 speech. Chong's Clifford Sifton lecture is also published in the May 1995 edition of *Canadian Speeches*, but in this journal it is given the title "Being Canadian." Among other things, this suggestive phrase may point to the rights and responsibilities involved in "being Canadian" when Canada is a diverse country with an international reputation for fairness and equality, a topic Chong addresses in her speech. The editors of *Canadian Speeches* explain the meaning of their title in a way that recalls former Minister of Manpower and Immigration J.S.G. Cullen's emphasis on the hopes of ethnic immigrants and the ideals of Canadian unity and tolerance, issues central to the official discourse of multiculturalism. Chong's narrative of her family history, the editors note, "is a story of pain, suffering and hardship, but also hope, pride and accomplishment. It is about the meaning of being Canadian: a sense of common purpose leavened with inclusiveness, diversity, understanding and tolerance, which make Canadian citizenship unique and precious" (Chong, "Being Canadian" 17).

In her 1995 lecture, Chong herself clearly echoes multicultural discourses in a number of key statements. In one of the clearest references to the value of diversity as emphasized in Canadian multiculturalism, for example, she notes: "Canadian citizenship recognizes differences. It praises diversity. It is what we as Canadians *choose* to have in common with each other" ("Work" 33). Although Chong emphasizes that differences are what bring Canadians together, she emphasizes that this union does not take place automatically. Rather, it entails some hard work, what she calls the "work of citizenship." This work includes leafing through the "Canadian family album" together, revisiting harsh verdicts like her own earlier condemnation of her grandmother before the writer understood what May-ying was up against, informing ourselves about the complex and inequity-ridden histories of our ancestors – telling our stories, our histories, differently. "How we tell our stories is the work of citizenship," she suggests ("Work" 32, 33). In her lecture, she outlines how difficult this journey is and how much historical baggage must be thought through in order to bring about this (multicultural) union.

Chong begins her speech by emphasizing oppositions. Although her name is joined with Clifford Sifton's in this lecture series, she underlines the unexpectedness or even perversity of such a union. "Our families began on opposite sides of the globe," Chong points out (30), and this opposition is a fundamental one, both literal and ideological. Clifford Sifton was Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905; an ambitious promoter of Canada and particularly of the Canadian West, Sifton had one major objective when he joined Wilfrid Laurier's federal cabinet in 1896: to populate the West, in particular with farmers from the United States or Europe (Francis et al. 126-28). Pointing out the great distance between Sifton's goals for Western Canada and her own family's origins, Chong asks her listeners/readers to "imagine ourselves at two very different seaports." At one seaport, Vancouver's in 1913, is her grandfather, a Chinese man in a tailored western suit, attire he thought would make a better impression in the new world ("Work" 30). At another, a seaport in Hamburg, the main point of embarkation for people leaving Central Europe, Clifford Sifton peruses potential immigrants to Canada. The ones he wanted were "stout, hardy peasants in sheepskin coats." Although her grandfather was a peasant, "[h]e wasn't stout; he was thin. He never owned a sheepskin coat" ("Work" 30-31). Sifton was a racist, she notes, in that he only wooed white immigrants to Canada. However, Chong also points out that in his time, Sifton came under attack for not being selective *enough*. According to Chong, by wooing immigrants who were not of British stock and by believing that immigrants could help build the nation, Clifford Sifton set a tone of openness and sowed the first seeds of diversity ("Work" 31).

Unlike the dominant multicultural discourses reflected, for example, in J.S.G. Cullen's speech, Chong refuses to project a fictional present onto a mythic past. In other words, she refuses to picture Canada's past and its present as characterized by a kind of ahistorical plenitude in which equality and a tolerance of diversity prevail. Instead, Chong shows how the past continues into the present. Clifford Sifton's attitude of openness – however limited – toward those who were then considered "the scum of Europe" sowed the first seeds of diversity ("Work" 31). Although this example emphasizes Sifton's openness without glossing over his obviously racist attitudes, when Chong states that we must acknowledge the past and learn from it, she does not emphasize early seeds of tolerance. Rather, she emphasizes the ways in which racist attitudes from the past continue into the present:

> The past holds some moral authority over us. Rather than forget it, we must acknowledge and learn from it. We have to be vigilant about looking past the stereotypes and seeing the contrasting truths. . . . It means lifting the charge against early Chinese of having no family values by seeing how the laws and history cleaved their families in two. It means going to the Legion and looking at a Sikh and seeing the veteran, as well as the turban. If we don't, we won't see that injustice cuts deep. It happened in my own family.
>
> ("Work" 32)

While Chong emphasizes the point that "ours is an *inclusive* society" (33), using collective terms such as "ours" or the earlier "*Let us imagine* ourselves at two very different seaports" (30, emphasis added) in order to draw both her audience and Canadians in general together, she does not gloss over the difficulties involved. An oblique reference to the divisive, ultimately racist debate concerning whether turbans should be allowed in Canadian Legion Halls suggests that Canada has a long way to go to achieve this ideal of inclusiveness. Chong holds this ideal as a kind of utopian possibility, one that "we" all need to work toward, and one that cannot be brought about by what Fleras and Elliott have called "a selective 'amnesia' about our racist past" (13).

Bodily Inscriptions

In the "Contexts" section of this chapter, I examined two distinct social contexts that shape the relationship between Hing and May-ying in *The Concubine's Children*. The first social context, one Chong explicitly focusses on in the text, involves pressures exerted on early Chinese communities in Canada by forces both within and beyond the borders of Chinatown. Racist

Canadian laws cleaved Chinese families in two and left the Chinese in Canada with little money and claustrophobic, highly regulated spaces to live in. Moreover, class and gender struggles within Chinatown, exacerbated by the pressures placed on Chinatown by the larger white society, left teahouse waitresses such as May-ying to bear the brunt of both racist and misogynist stereotypes. The first social context, then, focusses on Chinese Canadian histories; the second involves contemporary discourses of multiculturalism and national inclusiveness that shape Chong's rewriting of family history in *The Concubine's Children*. Chong writes within a framework of contemporary Canadian multiculturalism, a complex discourse that works, paradoxically, to erase the significance of race and ethnicity in immigrant history by imagining a past of equal opportunities while at the same time reifying such differences by representing ethnic communities as homogeneous groups. Dominant multicultural discourses help to maintain the vertical mosaic by denying its existence both in the past and in the present. To a certain extent, Chong challenges such representations in her 1995 Clifford Sifton lecture and particularly in *The Concubine's Children* by reexamining immigrant histories and by placing conflicts between her mother and her grandmother in the context of larger social and economic inequities. At the same time, as I examine further toward the end of this chapter, dominant multicultural discourses are partially reinscribed in Chong's text, as particular "Chinese" bodies are simultaneously written into and out of *The Concubine's Children*.

In order to look carefully at the ways in which issues of embodiment are entangled with larger social struggles and ideological conflicts in *The Concubine's Children*, it might be useful first to think about the ways in which notions of "Chineseness," like other modes of racialization, are inscribed on the body and complicated by historically-constructed notions of self-worth or unbelonging. In her article "On Not Speaking Chinese: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Politics of Diaspora," Ien Ang extends Fanon's notion of "the fact of blackness" - the idea that cultural and biological inferiority are socially inscribed on the surface of the black body, along with the devastating effects of such scripting – to the situation of overseas Chinese, or in other words, to people of Chinese descent living outside China. Although she grew up in Indonesia and spent more than two decades in the Netherlands, Ang notes, throughout her life she has been "implicitly or explicitly categorized, willy-nilly, as a 'Chinese'" (3). As a child, when other kids told her she belonged not in Indonesia but in a faraway place called China, she experienced Chineseness as an imposed identity, one that she desperately wanted to get rid of. However, Chineseness seemed inescapable, "inscribed as it was on the very surface of my body, much like what Frantz Fanon has called the 'corporeal malediction' of the fact of his blackness" (Ang 9). Chineseness, then, became a sign of not-belonging, a declaration of actually belonging somewhere else (Ang 11). What Ang, following Fanon, calls the "fact of yellowness" involves both a certain desire to assimilate, a longing for fitting in rather than standing out, and at the same time an incapability or refusal to adjust and adapt completely to the dominant culture (Ang 9). The difficult situation that Ang describes through her autobiographical narrative bears some resemblance to the position of "ethnic" communities under multiculturalism in Canada. The Chinese in Indonesia, she notes, could never become "true" Indonesians. Relying on Benedict Anderson's analysis of the origins of Indonesian nationalism, Ang observes that "it was precisely by the separating of the 'foreign Orientals' and the 'natives' in the colonial administration that a space was opened up for the latter, treated as the lowest of low by the Dutch, to develop a national consciousness which excluded the former" (Ang 8; cf. Anderson 112). In such a situation, Ang suggests, concrete social subjects are cornered into contradictory and conflict-ridden conditions of existence. At this point, Ang asks an important question: "How do they negotiate and carve out a space for themselves in the confusion created by these conditions of existence?" (Ang 8).

Denise Chong considers a similar question when she reconsiders the story of her mother's life in *The Concubine's Children*. Recalling the childhood experience Ien Ang describes in her autobiographical narrative, as a young girl Hing longs to lead a different kind of life, one far removed from what she vaguely sees as an unwanted "Chineseness," a shameful and devalued thing that is written on the body, that surrounds her, that permeates and defines her everyday life. In *Saltwater City* Paul Yee notes that for many Chinese Canadians, the 1950s was a new era of assimilation. According to Yee, Canadian-born Chinese increasingly turned away from things Chinese. Some parents, for example, "felt that Chinese school was a stumbling block to assimilation and preferred their children to take piano or dance lessons" (121, 126). In Chong's text, as a young woman desperate to escape the world of her painful childhood, Hing progressively turns away from "things Chinese." When she is a nursing student, for example, she goes by the name Winnie, the English name she chose for herself in kindergarten. At her wedding in 1950, the guests are served tea and white bread sandwiches instead of barbequed duck (159, 166, 180). Even many years later, Hing works to strip away any connection to Chinese ethnicity or identity: "You're Canadian, not Chinese. Stop trying to feel something," Hing instructs her own daughter, Denise, when the writer-daughter travels to China in the 1980s (238). Hing, or Winnie as she is often called later in life, tries to leave her painful childhood behind her in a past she would rather forget. In the process, she becomes alienated from the mother she associates with this lonely and difficult part of her life. For Hing, the gambling, the drinking, and the men in her mother's life are all connected, and this life is etched on her mother's ailing body. Hing sees her mother as somehow painfully degraded – something she vaguely and tragically associates with being Chinese.

In this section of my chapter, I look at the ways in which notions of "Chineseness" crucially affect the relationship between Hing and May-ying. Following Ien Ang, I consider "Chineseness" not simply as an abstract idea or system of ideas about a particular racial ethnic group, but rather as something that is inscribed on the very surface of the body, in its gestures, its features, and its practices. In the first part of this section, "Reading 'Chinese' Bodies: Hing's Troubled View of May-ying," I focus on the way Hing reads her mother's body and her bodily practices in *The Concubine's Children*. For Hing, her mother's sexuality, her excessive drinking, the food she eats, the clothes she wears, the illnesses she suffers all associate her with a "Chineseness" that must be escaped. In her own life, Hing works to suppress or deny any connection to Chineseness in order to leave the racial ethnic ghetto she suffered with her mother behind. However, this attempt to sever connections takes a tremendous toll on Hing. Even as she works to distance herself from her mother and from her mother's racialized body, Hing finds that she is unable to do so completely. She does not always acknowledge her own need to create this distance and, at the same time, she suffers tremendous anguish over what she sees as her abandonment of her mother and also of her extended family.

The second part of this section on bodily inscriptions, "The Work of Citizenship: Revaluing May-ying, Reinscribing 'Chineseness,'" turns from Hing's to May-ying's point of view and to Chong's positive reevaluation of May-ying in *The Concubine's Children*. If Hing sees May-ying as in some way painfully degraded, Chong's text works both to understand as well as ultimately to contest this view. Although Chong underlines Hing's need to save her family from the negative influences of May-ying's alcohol-ridden life in *The Concubine's Children*, she also works to revalue May-ying by reconsidering the crucial role of her labour. May-ying's labour (both productive and reproductive) as well as the financial and emotional sacrifices she makes for the benefit of the Chinese half of the family are seen by those around her as natural and inevitable; consequently, her important contributions to the family's survival and well-being are forgotten by later generations. Chong's text is partly an act of remembering and thus revaluing May-ying as a good mother, as a strong and stubborn woman, and as an immigrant-ancestor determined, if not always able, to find a better life for her children. By examining the psychic, familial, and societal economies that shape both May-ying's life and the way her life is remembered, Chong rewrites her grandmother's legacy. Moreover, by putting the notion of economies back into multicultural discourses of ethnic difference, Chong takes an important step toward exposing the "vertical mosaic" repressed in the dominant multicultural dream.

However, as I underline in this final section of my chapter, Chong's reevaluation of contemporary multicultural discourses is an ambiguous one. Following the double erasure managed by multicultural discourses – an erasure whereby racial ethnic differences as well as the cultural violence involved in assimilation are both underlined and paradoxically denied – both Hing and the text of *The Concubine's Children* itself work to cover over the necessity of repressing a negatively evaluated "Chinese" difference. In other words, if Hing reacts in a profoundly ambivalent way to her mother, both wanting to see her mother in a positive light and yet at the same time violently drawing away from her, the text likewise rewrites the story of Hing's painful childhood in ways that reveal and yet, at the same time, attempt to bury the idea that Hing's Chinese mother is in some way "unlovable." Significantly, the way Chong revalues May-ying retains Hing's notion of a "Chineseness" that somehow must be escaped. In order to see May-ying as a valued foremother, Chong displaces this unwanted "Chineseness" onto the overseas relatives left at home in China. While *The Concubine's Children* does important ideological work by helping to break the idea of the Chinese as eternally ethnic others or as "foreigners" in Canada, to borrow Kamboureli's term, it does so at a cost: what it negates locally, it reinscribes globally. The text continually contrasts May-ying's "Western" ways – her independence, her desire for a nuclear family, her drive to remain in Canada, and her unwillingness to conform to certain patriarchal traditions, for example, traits portrayed as thoroughly inscribed on her body and revealed through her bodily practices – with the "Chinese" ways of Huangbo, the first wife Chan Sam left at home in China. By showing the tenacity of categories such as "Chineseness" in contemporary Canadian multicultural discourses – by showing how an essentialist notion of "Chineseness" continues to be produced even as it is contested – Chong's text suggests the continuing limits of racial and multicultural discourses in Canada.

Reading "Chinese" Bodies: Hing's Troubled View of May-ying

Throughout her life, Hing repeatedly strives to distance herself from her mother, from her mother's ways, and from her mother's ailing, sexual, "Chinese" body. As a teenager, for example, a painfully embarrassed Hing denies that the woman being hauled out of a gambling club by police, the only woman among the men, is her mother (148). For Hing, Chong suggests, the fact that May-ying spends much of her time gambling in an all-male club brands her a "loose" woman just as much as her waitressing does, since no "good" woman would be seen in such a situation. When May-ying comes home one night at three o'clock in the morning with a strange man (having been, Hing speculates, among the last people chased from the gambling clubs at closing) and pours the stranger a glass of gin, claiming it will improve his general health and circulation, Hing "lay there seething . . . . The things she hated most about her mother's life – the gambling, the men, the drinking, her frail health – had that evening rolled into one" (162). Years later, instead of cooking Chinese-style the way her mother did, Hing feeds her own children lasagna and roasts, enriched milk, pound cake, and apple pie – the kind of food that would make them "as robust as their playmates" (224) – not weak like the mother who was forever sick, whose aches always needed tending, whose body always failed her. As an adult, Hing rarely revisits the dingy alleyways where she used to live with her mother, and she rarely mentions her past (234-35). Although she rarely says so in so many words, Hing/Winnie's thoughts and her actions suggest that she is particularly ashamed of what she vaguely sees as her mother's "Chineseness"–

something she associates with her mother's ailing body, her sexuality, her gambling and drinking ways, her strict methods of child rearing, her clothes, her ways of preparing food, and a range of other actions and bodily attributes that Hing has learned to condemn. The older Hing gets, the more anxious she becomes to distance herself from what she sees as her mother's "Chinese" ways. When May-ying dies in a car accident, Hing gives away her mother's jewelry that she used to cart to and from the pawn shop for her mother, a gift handed down for generations from mother to daughter. Although the jewelry is supposed to bring luck according to Chinese tradition, Hing wants nothing of it (9-10, 129, 180, 233). Significantly, the only words that Hing hears at the inquest following her mother's death in a car accident is that the woman in what is referred to as the "Chinese" car had no traces of alcohol in her body (231-32). Somehow Hing wants her mother's body to be clean, freed of all traces of what Hing associates with a dingy Chinatown life.

Hing's view of her mother's body as somehow dirty or contaminated shapes the daughter's life. Most significantly, Hing is left feeling profoundly ashamed of both her mother and herself, and this sense of shame influences the choices the daughter makes, the values she upholds, the sense of self she struggles for, and the uneasy relation she has with her own personal history. The painful words that always end Hing's stories of her childhood, "I had nobody," are echoed three times in *The Concubine's Children* (4, 220, 262), and while Chong shows that the reasons for this isolation are multiple and complex, as a child Hing can see only one cause: her mother. In the class-conscious Chinatown community that she grows up in, Hing finds that without a "proper" mother, she is not allowed to play with other children because other mothers will not allow it, nor is she able to keep either family or friends in her life (120). Hing largely blames her isolation on what she considers her mother's willful misuse of her own body, a misuse that Hing sees as the sign of an ethical and moral failure. In Hing's view, her mother does not properly police her body, neither how she uses it, as a commodity exchangeable for cash, nor what she puts into it, a constant stream of alcohol, nor where she locates it, in gambling dens and rooming houses filled mostly with single men. For Hing, her mother's abuses of her body suggest that May-ying is out of control, weakly unable or stubbornly unwilling to change her life. Because Hing firmly believes what she has been taught, that a good daughter must obey and care for her mother, she finds herself forcefully torn in two directions: both toward and away from her mother. Hing ministers to her mother's aches and pains as a child and takes her mother into her own home to care for her as an adult; at the same time, she longs to get away from her mother, from her mother's ways of using and abusing her own body, and from her mother's body itself, a body that Hing sees as both contaminated and potentially contaminating.

For Hing, even her mother's most highly-praised attribute, her striking beauty, ultimately points to May-ying's failings and weaknesses. The most generous thing Hing ever says about May-ying is that she was beautiful (4), and this absence of praise itself hints at the resentment, grief, and anger Hing still feels years later when she recalls the kind of mothering she received. During Hing's childhood, her mother's beauty prompts cruel comparisons: "Why is it that May-ying is so pretty, and yet she bore such a bad-looking daughter?" people say to each other (126). Such comparisons work to strip away the sense of self Hing struggles to achieve by defining her solely as mere body, as an inadequate face. Moreover, these remarks are particularly cutting for a girl already acutely embarrassed by the oversized clothing her financially strapped mother dresses her in, the overly mature body she has compared to her classmates as a result of being enrolled twice in the first grade, and the eczema scars that are visible on her legs a few years later when bobby socks and saddle shoes come into fashion (126). Although unwilling to spend money on good clothes for her daughter, May-ying herself always seems to be impeccably and fashionably dressed (123), underlining both the physical contrast between mother and daughter as well as the sense of injustice Hing feels as the daughter of a seemingly unreasonable and self-centred mother. May-ying's beauty is particularly painful for Hing because the contrast with her own plain looks is a constant reminder of their economic troubles as well as of her mother's unjust ways. As Hing sees it, her mother's beauty is also partly to blame for what she interprets as her mother's morally reprehensible behaviour: the fact that May-ying trades her beauty for cash through a series of casual liaisons with "secret friends" (108) leaves Hing feeling disgraced and humiliated. In many ways, then, Hing's appreciation of her mother's beauty is double-edged. For Hing, her mother's greatest asset also contains a sharp core of pain.

Perhaps most painful of all for Hing, however, is the fact that she associates her mother's supposedly degraded body with Chinatown and, even more devastatingly, with Chineseness. That Hing makes this association may seem somewhat surprising at first, since Hing certainly realizes that her life with her mother is not "normal" (126), that her mother is not like other mothers in Chinatown (158). Other mothers are not as strict; they do not control their daughters' sexuality in a fanatical way; they do not drink until they are unable to care for themselves or their children; they do not dress their daughters in boys' clothing. Nevertheless, Hing firmly and repeatedly connects her mother's inexplicable ways of abusing bodies – her own and her daughter's – with her mother's Chineseness. If, as I argued in a previous section, Chinese teahouse waitresses often had to bear the brunt of racist and misogynist stereotypes within a class-conscious Chinatown, Hing's view of her mother is likewise shaped by the discourses and practices that condemned such women. Ien Ang examines a similar shaping of perspective in "On Not Speaking Chinese," an article that considers some of the complex identity questions faced by overseas Chinese. She recalls the difficult position she found herself in the one and only time she travelled to China, a country, according to Ang, that "continues to speak to the world's imagination" in terms of its supposed "awesome difference" (1). Although categorized throughout her life as a "Chinese" herself, she found herself looking at China through tourists' eyes, reacting, for example, "with a mixture of shame and disgust at the 'thirdworldliness'" of what she saw (Ang 3). She felt caught in-between: she wanted to protect China from the too-harsh judgement she imagined her fellow travellers would pass upon it, but she also felt an irrational anger towards China itself – at its "backwardness," its unworldliness (Ang 3). Just as Ang looks at China through eyes that are not just her own, Hing views her mother and her mother's body in ways that have been shaped by white stereotypes of the Chinese as an "alien" and inferior race "steeped in moral depravity and degradation" and by corresponding stereotypes of Chinatowns as "dirty and disease-ridden, as centers of gambling and crime" (*Concubine's* 12, 14).

Hing clearly sees herself as "tarnished" by her mother and her mother's bodily practices (144). When May-ying follows one of her lovers, Chow Guen, to Winnipeg, for example, she leaves her adolescent daughter behind in Vancouver for a period of nearly three years. Abandoned by her mother, Hing boards with a woman who resembles May-ying in all of the ways Hing loathes: Mrs. "Lo" (whose name seems so obviously symbolic that readers might suspect Chong changed a name here) pays more attention to her appearance and to the men in her life than she does to the two teenaged girls in her care; she lives with a man who is not the biological father of her teenaged daughter; she sublets rooms on Market Alley, the alley with the lowest rents in Chinatown, the same place May-ying lived when Hing was born; and she is a waitress with a "loose reputation" (142-43). The resemblance between the two women is underlined when May-ying finally returns to Vancouver and moves in with Mrs. Lo. To Hing's dismay, the two women fall into a routine of gambling, smoking, and drinking together, and Hing feels hopelessly trapped (145). The parallel established between the two women is important: Hing's violent disapproval of Mrs. Lo ultimately derives from the shame the adolescent girl feels about her mother's ways. This disapproval is very much connected with location, with the particular street in Chinatown that links the two women: "When I come back to Vancouver," Hing writes in a letter to Mrs. Lo's daughter Beatrice, "I don't want to come back to 124 Market Alley. It stinks and it's filthy . . ." (145). For Hing this street and, by implication, both Mrs. Lo and her mother, are literally saturated with a negatively-constructed, mysterious, even criminal "Chineseness": Mrs. Lo's end of the alley "reeked of bean sprouts soaking in a grocer's tubs and was damp from the steam of a laundry (where, according to Guen, someone had once dumped a body into a vat of lye without leaving a trace)" (143). From Hing's perspective, Market Alley and the criminal "Chineseness" associated with it are inextricably connected with Mrs. Lo's "deviant" sexuality as a Chinatown waitress. Mrs. Lo's five-room apartment, perpetually filled with transient Chinese opera actors and actresses and other waitress friends, is specifically contrasted with the home of another family with whom Hing briefly boards, a "reputable" family with "a husband and wife who were always around, who were kind and soft-spoken, neither drank or gambled" (142).

Hing finds one incident with Mrs. Lo particularly painful. When Mrs. Lo asks a male acquaintance for forty dollars to buy a winter coat for "the poor girl" in her care, a girl whose mother "isn't even concerned about her," Hing's cheeks flush with embarrassment. She "felt like she had been used to get money from a man, and the images flashed before her mind of her mother currying favors with men in Nanaimo" (144). Although Hing is upset by Mrs. Lo's words, the real source of her pain is the reminder of her mother's participation in an illicit sexual economy. In Hing's view, her mother's financially motivated sexual encounters are debasing for both her mother and herself. For Hing, Mrs. Lo's words doubly recall the way May-ying panders to the men in her life while ignoring the needs of her daughter, devaluing both mother and daughter in the process. Worst of all for Hing is the feeling that she is somehow contaminated by her mother's actions. The incident with Mrs. Lo leaves Hing feeling "tainted by Mrs. Lo's loose reputation" (143) – or more significantly, substituting for Mrs. Lo the woman whose actions Mrs. Lo's words so painfully recall, tainted by her mother's ways of using her body as sexual commodity. As a young person, Hing feels particularly powerless, unable to control how others will read her through such incidents. The word "tainted," with its undertones of being marked, blemished, or stained, reverberates a page later: when the coat Mrs. Lo bargains for finally does appear, Hing finds that she can never wear it without feeling "tarnished" (144). The feeling of being tainted or tarnished derives from Hing's belief that her mother's sexual/"Chinese" body – and by implication, her own – is somehow improper or dirty. For Hing, moreover, such a body indicates a less than adequate self.

As a teenager, Hing attempts literally to shape her body and her self in opposition to the qualities that she sees in her mother. Both Hing and Mrs. Lo's daughter Beatrice find the conditions on Market Alley "intolerable," and they do what they can to escape (143). Unlike Mrs. Lo's daughter, who uses her time unproductively by watching western movies instead of studying, Hing spends her time at the Municipal Library looking up books on self-improvement. Distancing herself from the "unwise" activities of Beatrice and thus, by implication, from what she sees as the corrupt lives of both Mrs. Lo and May-ying, Hing follows the advice she finds in these books. She practices her smile in front of the bathroom mirror (143) – attempting, perhaps, to erase the memory of cruel comparisons with her mother's beauty, but attempting also to construct a self that will lead to a life different from the one she shares with her mother. In this repeated moment of self construction, Hing believes, or wants to believe, that the right facial gestures will result in a better self, and that a successful life will flow inevitably from the construction of a proper face and a proper self. Hing's idea that success can be achieved through individual effort and positive thinking literally inscribed on the body derives in part from a North American dream of unlimited class mobility, a dream that promises material rewards and a happier life for those who mould themselves in the proper way. It is the same dream that underlies the dominant multicultural version of Canadian history in which hard-working immigrants are inevitably rewarded with material prosperity - only in this case, Hing finds that it is her body that she must work on.

To construct an adequate self, Hing tries to wipe away the marks and blemishes on her own body. In a wildly optimistic and paradoxically self-negating act that recalls the way Chan Sam commissions a Hollywood scene for the house in China many years earlier, Hing tries out a "miracle spot remover" advertised in one of Beatrice's magazines "about Hollywood and its movie stars" in order to remove the scars on her legs (143). The "spot" that she longs to obliterate is both a physical mark on her body and a material link with her painful past: the scars are caused by Hing's childhood eczema (126) and also, presumably, by the repeated beatings her strict "Chinese" mother gave her. Like the coat that leaves Hing feeling tarnished, the scars make Hing stand out in a way that she finds intolerable (126). Both the coat and the scars are physical signs of a "tarnished" identity that can only be escaped, in Hing's view, by disassociating herself from her mother and her past. In a passage near the end of the text, Chong connects Hing's physical scars with emotional scars and also, significantly, with a Chinatown past. Posing for a family picture with her own children in Vancouver's Chinatown, Hing notices a broken pipe she ran into as a child, an encounter that left a scar on her leg (235). "Somebody ought to have fixed that pipe by now," Denise's mother comments. Reflecting on her mother's first reference to her sad history in years, the autobiographical narrator notes that "there was still hurt there in need of repair, rather like that broken pipe in Chinatown" (235). Despite the advertisement's promise that a perfectly unmarked, implicitly white (Hollywood "movie-star") body is available to North Americans who purchase the right products, Hing finds that there are no miracle cures for the hurt inscribed on her body, a pain and that she tries alternately to heal and to suppress. No matter how much she wishes to wipe out the scars on her legs or the shame she feels about her past, the grief remains, and the spot cannot be easily or painlessly removed. As an adult, Hing is especially afraid that the visceral pain she carries with her will be passed on to the next generation. When she grabs the hollow extension to the vacuum cleaner to punish her own teenaged daughter, Denise begins to hyperventilate, and Hing freezes when she recognizes her daughter's pain as her own: "'I used to cry like that. My mom used to strike me for no reason'" (235).

From childhood onward, Hing believes that her mother's painful bodily practices stem from her traditional Chinese ways, ways that Hing can see only as inexplicable, perplexing, and ultimately shameful. For Hing, "being Chinese" involves a dizzying array of exotic practices and beliefs, physically manifested, for example, in the deer's tail and skunk's gall bladder May-ying uses to treat her ulcer and her back pain as well as in the various herbs her mother ferments in a huge jar to make a potent alcohol, a jar Hing nearly smashes in frustration and anger (94, 162-63). It means a life marred by alcoholism, disease, and shameful sexuality. It means picking her mother up at gambling dens (63); it means having relatives overseas who are considered more important than Hing herself (130); it means policing herself with a vengeance even when her mother doesn't (155-56); it means not going to social events at school or in Chinatown, and it means quitting school to support her family because her mother cannot (155, 163). It means being accused of being "unfilial" - "the most grievous accusation a parent could make against a child" (200) - when Hing refuses to send money to relatives left behind in China, a distant family she has never met, and it means being sued by her parents for fifteen hundred dollars when they are short of cash (195, 213, 209-10). For Hing, "being Chinese" also means being singled out in school and later in nursing as somehow different. In grade school, when Hing is kept out of school because she lacks a winter coat and boots, her mother instructs her, "Tell the teacher you are going to China." When the teacher asks Hing to tell the class about China, she makes up a story as best she can (92). In nursing school, Hing is the only Chinese student among fourteen whites, and she is treated differently, asked invasive personal questions, continually suspected of wrongdoing, forced to do an extra three-month probationary term (166-67). When she is recovering from an appendix operation, despite her protests she is assigned to the most violent ward, a ward where patients often kick and attack the nurses (177).

"At home in one's skin – taken for granted by most people in this society, but not if that skin is not white," Chinese Canadian writer and activist May Yee writes (15). For Hing, "being Chinese" means living uncomfortably in her own body. May-ying's habit of dressing Hing in short pants and suspenders when Hing is a tiny girl is only the most obvious example of this bodily discomfort: "You get so dirty when you play; you're going to wear pants. I'm going to change you into a boy!" May-ying declares, and the feeling that Hing has disappointed her mother stays with the daughter throughout her life (90-91). Ironically, May-ying's excuse for dressing her daughter in this way – "You get so dirty when you play" – not only points to assumed gender differences, but it also recalls white stereotypes of the Chinese as "dirty." When her first daughter, Ping, was in Canada, May-ying dressed her in fashionable clothing and proudly showed her off as proof of her good mothering, especially when Ping would point to refuse in the streets and sternly pronounce, "Dirty!" (35). Hing, on the other hand, only hears that she is the "dirty" daughter. One of the lessons Hing is learning, then, is that those who are "dirty" will be punished, that this punishment is meted out because of an improper body (in this case an improperly gendered Chinese body), and that the punishment will be enacted in some way on the body. Many years later, Hing writes a sad response to a question asked on a psychological questionnaire she fills out to enter the nursing program, a question about whether she was happy being a girl: "she answered according to how she thought her mother felt, that she would have made everybody happier had she been a boy" (167). The director of nursing decides that Hing is a mixed-up, disturbed person (167), and her summary judgement only increases the bodily troubles Hing experiences, ultimately exposing her to the attacks of violent patients.

It is not just overt questions of gender or race that make her body feel somehow unlivable, awkward, or wrong. For Hing, even size is an issue. When Hing is a child, her body must be just the right size: in Nanaimo she must be small enough so that her mother can try to bargain Hing's meals into her waitressing contract ("She doesn't eat much," May-ying tells her employers, 111), while just a few years later she must be big enough to cook and care for herself and also for her younger brother, Gok-leng (145). The painful disjunction written into Hing's position as both a perpetual child who must obey her mother's strict demands and as a child-adult forced to take on weighty responsibilities when her alcoholic mother is unable or unwilling to do so is inscribed on Hing's body. As a teenager, Hing stitches her brassieres down to flatten her maturing chest, as though reluctant to allow her body to mirror her mother's; at the same time, the huge hems of her new dresses and the paper napkins she stuffs into the toes of her new shoes underline the fact that she is still a child awkwardly and prematurely dressed in a woman's clothing (126). For Hing, "being Chinese" also means physical danger, whether because of the possibility of physical attack on the nursing wards or because of the likelihood of exposure to illnesses such as her mother's tuberculosis. If May-ying's ailing body always needs her daughter's tending, Chinatown itself is portrayed as a place where people fall ill. Years after her own childhood, when Hing dresses her two young daughters in matching mustard-coloured coats and hats trimmed in black velvet (in contrast with the oversized clothes her own mother dressed her in) to meet their grandmother for the first time, one stop at a Chinese greasy spoon is enough to send the younger daughter, Denise, to the hospital with dysentery (202). When Hing is a mother herself, "being Chinese" means needing to keep her children away from their grandmother for their own protection, to keep them from being exposed to tuberculosis and to May-ying's alcoholic frenzies (215, 221).

Hing's sense of perplexity about "being Chinese" is something that she passes on to her children, including the autobiographical narrator, Denise. Having read Lin Yu-Tang's *Moment in Peking*, the same book about China that Hing enjoyed as a child (166, 220), the young Denise concludes that she does not have a clue about what it means to be "Chinese." While she knew that half of her family remained in China,

> The Chinese side was a mystery to me. . . . What I remembered most about *Moment in Peking*, a tome of more than 800 pages, was that women and girls, blamed for their own misfortunes, routinely committed suicide by either throwing themselves down wells or into reflecting pools. All that seemed beyond the reach of reality. To me, China was what was left behind . . . . China was where you'd find yourself if you dug a hole deep enough to come out the other side of the Earth. (220)

For the young Denise, as for her mother before her, this sense of a mysterious and alien Chineseness is embodied in May-ying. Noting, for example, that May-ying's "Chineseness" could take the family "by surprise," the autobiographical narrator describes in detail how her grandmother once slaughtered a live chicken for a family dinner. When the chicken escapes from its sack, it is chased around the basement until it is finally caught – already an odd and, for the children, amusing event in their otherwise suburban, middle-class home. The exotic nature of May-ying's slaughtering act is underlined by the narrator's awestruck words: "We couldn't have imagined what followed" (224). The passage suggests that May-ying's "Chinese" eating habits literally stain Hing's home: May-ying "wielded a Chinese cleaver across the chicken's throat; blood splattered, staining the Dutch Lady curtains above the sink" (224).

Rachel C. Lee's description of the arbitrary way in which things "Oriental" are associated with uncleanliness in early twentieth century racist tracts provides an interesting gloss on

May-ying's bloody staining of Hing's "Dutch lady," solidly middle-class, European-style curtains. According to Lee, in a June 17, 1913 article in *Collier's* entitled "Japan in California," an article written in support of the Alien Land Law which prohibited "aliens" ineligible for citizenship from buying land (Lee 251, 271 n.3), Peter McFarlane

> condemned the members of a Japanese farming community in Florin by calling them "Oriental" and proclaiming their "unclean" habits and morals. McFarlane deemed the Japanese "unclean" because "There are no lace curtains at the windows, only shades. . . . There are no cows or calves, not even a fowl [in the barnyard], for these Japanese of Florin are tillers of the soil pure and simple." (Lee 251)

In McFarlane's diatribe, Lee observes, "'[u]nclean' becomes synonymous with nonconformity to American tastes in home decoration and husbandry" (Lee 252, 271 n.3). Although the chicken incident related in *The Concubine's Children* is a lighthearted one, decades after McFarlane condemns the Japanese as "unclean" because they do not have lace curtains at the windows, there are still hints of an unclean "Chineseness" that May-ying brings to Hing's home, staining the curtains and tarnishing both Hing's and her family's life. When May-ying eventually moves in with Hing and her family, tension pervades the house (207), and it is only Hing's husband, with his "limited Chinese," who can still the constant confrontation between mother and daughter: "His voice, in English, intercepted the insults mother and daughter were throwing at each other. 'This has got to stop, Winnie. This has got to stop right now'" (209).

From her mother, Denise learns to try to deny or ignore any connection to "Chineseness." When her classmates taunt "Chinky, Chinky Chinaman" and throw stone-laden snowballs at Denise and her siblings, the children follow their mother's advice and feign deafness (218). When asked where her grandmother is from (the question that so often plagues many people of colour in Canada since it assumes that they must be from "elsewhere"),[12] Denise tries to escape the implied connection with Chineseness by telling her acquaintance that her grandmother was born in Ladner, British Columbia – the place May-ying's false birth certificate named as her place of birth. Denise distances herself from her grandmother's Chineseness in another way as well: although she realizes that May-ying does not speak English and that she is not white, Denise forgets that her own family is also "different-looking" (224-25), a loaded term to describe her own and her family's "Chinese" appearance. It is Hing who teaches Denise to dissociate herself from her grandmother, since for Hing, May-ying's "Chinese" body and her life are somehow shameful.

The profound ambivalence that Hing feels about her mother – the way she is drawn both toward her mother in order to care for her and away from her mother in order to keep from being "tainted" by her – is particularly underlined when May-ying is killed in a car accident. Hing alternates between crying uncontrollably, as though "her whole world ha[d] suddenly caved in" on her, and remaining cool, unsentimental, and dispassionate (229, 233). In the days immediately following her mother's death, Hing often seems detached and distant: she does not cry at the funeral; she sells her mother's only valued possessions, her jewelry, in order to pay for modest funeral expenses; and she asks the building's caretaker to dispose of her mother's effects (233). Hing wants nothing to do with the dangling earrings and the pendant her mother wore, since they are only sad reminders of an unhappy childhood: it was Hing's duty to take this jewelry to the pawn shop whenever her mother needed extra cash (232-33). Following her mother's death, then, in some ways Hing only seems anxious to move on, to leave her mother behind, and to close the door on a painful past.

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[12] Camille Hérnandez-Ramdwar, for example, writes: "I do not feel like a Canadian (despite being born and raised here) because I am not accepted at face value. People, upon meeting me, still open conversations with 'And where are you from?' as if a person of my complexion could not possibly be born here" (qtd. in Mukherjee 434).

At the same time, however, Hing is tremendously moved by particular sights or sounds connected with her mother's death. These charged moments, for the most part, have to do with the way Hing and those around her see and ultimately interpret May-ying's body. Both Hing and the narrator of *The Concubine's Children* focus on the "tiny" body's perfection and beauty and, at the same time, its potential weakness, ugliness, or contamination. At the inquest following May-ying's death, "Exhibit 2(f)" is a photograph of May-ying's body in the morgue. Hing sits at the back of the room, distanced both physically and emotionally from the proceedings. However, the body in the photograph catches Hing's eye: she "thought at first it must be a model, a doll – it was so tiny, so perfectly proportioned" (231). If May-ying's beauty is so marked that Chan Sam sees her as "a porcelain doll come to life" when he first meets her (23),[13] in death, this perfect body makes May-ying seem both fragile and breakable. Indeed, it is May-ying's brokenness that Hing particularly notices at her mother's funeral. To Hing, who was always painfully aware of her mother's shortcomings even when others only noticed her beauty, May-ying only looks beautiful from a distance. When well-meaning relatives file past May-ying's casket at the funeral and whisper that May-ying still looks beautiful, Hing's vehement response is particularly striking, especially given her often detached reaction to her mother's death: "They're just saying that," she thinks. "My mother was a very beautiful woman. I've never seen her so ugly in my whole life" (232). As the autobiographical narrator explains, the car accident marred May-ying's physical beauty, with puffiness hiding the fine bones in her face (232). Whatever the physical explanation, Hing's disproportionate reaction to the mourner's sentimental remarks suggests that the way both she and others perceive May-ying's body is as important to Hing as ever. For Hing, May-ying's body is both unspeakably beautiful and painfully ugly. It is a body that Hing is both drawn toward and repulsed by. Moreover, this body contains a "truth" – perhaps about May-ying, perhaps also about Hing herself – that must be both sought out and somehow protected.

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[13] "But for her unbound feet," Chong notes, as a young woman May-ying "had the body and features much imitated in Chinese porcelain dolls" (7).

If Hing is mindful of the way her mother's body looks both at the inquest and at the funeral, she is even more concerned about what investigators find *inside* her mother's body. According to the report at the inquest, May-ying's death was partially caused by her alcoholism. While others in what is referred to as the "Chinese" car all escaped with barely a bruise, May-ying was not so lucky: one non-functioning kidney left her body more rigid, less able to absorb the impact of the collision (231). Although Hing does not pay much attention to the proceedings, she does pay attention both to her mother's tiny body and to an unexpected question a juror asks the pathologist about this body: "'Was there any evidence of alcohol in the deceased woman's blood?'" (231-32). According to Chong, "the answer, 'No,' reverberated in [Hing's] head" (232). After May-ying's death, Hing continues to see her mother's body as somehow contaminated or dirty: the alcohol in her mother's body and her mother's beauty, or lack of it, are the two things on which Hing focusses her attention. However, Hing also has a pressing need to see her mother's body – and by extension, her own body, her history, and her self – as clean, unsullied, and intact.

The Work of Citizenship: Revaluing May-ying, Reinscribing "Chineseness"

> The first question I asked myself was how was I, a writer, going to do honour to my family? . . . .
>
> So what of the reader's desire to sort fact from fiction or fact from imagination? My sense is that the crucial difference is not between fact and

> fiction, but rather fact and truth. The question for the writer is to rise above the facts, and ascend to some greater truths.
>
> Denise Chong, "The Fiction in Non-Fiction" (11)

> If we do some of this work of citizenship, we will stand on firmer common ground. . . . We will find a sense of identity and a common purpose. We will have something to hand down to the next generation.
>
> My grandfather's act of immigration to the new world and the determination of my grandmother – the girl who first came here as a *kay toi neu* – to chance the journey from China back to Canada so that my mother could be born here, will stand as gifts to all future generations of my family. Knowing that my grandparents came hoping for a better life makes it easy for me to love both them and this country.
>
> [When Chong found it difficult to feel "Chineseness" in China, her mother wrote to her]: "You're Canadian, not Chinese. Stop trying to feel anything." She was right. I stopped such contrivances. I am Canadian; it is what embodies the values of my life.
>
> Denise Chong, "The Work of Citizenship" (34)

If Hing longs for a mother and a past uncontaminated by the negative "Chineseness" socially inscribed on her mother's body, it could be said that *The Concubine's Children* itself continues this longing and that it searches, just as Hing does, for a narrative solution to this painful personal and historical dilemma. In an earlier section of this chapter, I suggested that Chong's text both relies on and, to a certain extent, challenges two key ideas that are central to dominant multicultural discourses in Canada: first, the idea that Canada is, and always has been, a land of equal promise and opportunity for all immigrants; and second, the idea that each racial ethnic group in Canada has distinctive, relatively unchanging characteristics that are celebrated insofar as they contribute to Canada's identity as a tolerant multicultural nation. In this section, I examine more closely the ways in which Chong's text reinscribes these "multicultural" ideas even while it challenges them. This multicultural contestation and reinscription, I suggest, is particularly evident in the ambivalent representation of Denise's grandmother, the concubine May-ying. May-ying is alternately portrayed as a tyrannical alcoholic mother and quasi-prostitute trying, not always successfully, to cope with an impossible life, and as a strong Canadian immigrant-ancestor whose hard work and determination allowed her Canadian descendants to thrive.

The Concubine's Children revalues May-ying by focussing on the importance of her labour to herself, her family, and her community. Although the most obvious part of this labour involves May-ying's devalued work as a mother and as a teahouse waitress, a devaluation Chong's text works to contest, this labour also crucially involves something that could be called, borrowing a phrase from Chong's Clifford Sifton lecture, "the work of citizenship." Chong rewrites May-ying's legacy by emphasizing how an evolving "Canadianness," understood largely through the lens of Canada's current multicultural ideals, embodies the values of May-ying's life. While at one level, the identification of May-ying with characteristics valued in current multicultural discourses allows both Denise and Hing to escape a painful legacy of "Chineseness," at another level, this solution has a cost: in this text Chong can only emphasize May-ying's Canadianness by displacing an unwanted "Chineseness" onto the overseas relatives. Although *The Concubine's Children* reaches across gaps of time and history that have separated two halves of a family in order to write a more complex history than dominant multicultural discourses normally allow, at another level, the text reinscribes the multicultural discourses it also contests. It does so in at least three ways: by including racial ethnic others, in this case the Chinese relatives, only at the margins, as a supplement to the Canadian family's narrative; by reinscribing the notion of Canada as a promised land for immigrants whose various labours allow them to be included in the Canadian mosaic; and by allowing the Chinese relatives to participate in the (Canadian) family album only at the cost of exoticizing them.

The portrayal of May-ying in *The Concubine's Children* is a highly ambivalent one. If at times, the autobiographical narrator seems to agree with Hing's harshly judgmental view of May-ying and her traditional "Chinese" ways, at other times, this portrait is directly contested. In part, Chong challenges this negative portrait by examining the difficult social circumstances that shape May-ying's life – inequities that are quickly glossed over in celebratory multicultural histories. Condemned as an inadequate mother from the start by discourses suggesting that morally "tainted" teahouse waitresses make bad mothers, May-ying struggles to prove that she is a good mother using any means available to her. She disciplines Hing as strictly as possible not only because she believes it is the best way to raise a child, but also partly to gain the social approval she lacks. In the gambling dens, one of the few places where she feels welcome and accepted, May-ying finds that the men appreciate her parenting efforts: "No one there thought May-ying a negligent parent. In fact, men complimented her child-raising: 'Hing is so smart, so well-behaved'" (91). Because May-ying's children officially belong to the first wife, Huangbo, and because parents such as Chan Sam "feared that filling children's heads with a white society's curriculum and a foreigner's language first might turn them against going back to China" (47), May-ying's two eldest daughters are left behind in China to be raised by Huangbo. Although Hing is born and raised in Canada, in her letters to her family overseas she addresses Huangbo, a woman she has never met, as her mother, greeting her with virtually the same phrase each time: "Honorable Mother, I kneel before you with my head bowed and my hands clasped" (99). With her status as a mother always in question, then, May-ying stubbornly emphasizes her right to mother Hing, her biological daughter, in any way she sees fit. When some men at the Ho Yuen restaurant where May-ying works try to stop her from beating Hing across the legs one day, for example, May-ying replies: "The more you tell me, the harder I'll hit. She's my own flesh and blood. If you think what I'm doing is wrong, then take me to jail" (105-106).

In her 1995 Clifford Sifton Lecture, Chong recalls how her own attitude toward May-ying changed: "I too condemned my *Popo* [grandmother]," Chong notes, "until I learned what she had been fighting against all her life" ("Work" 32). If traces of this earlier condemnation appear in *The Concubine's Children* (eg., 106, 219), they appear alongside a far more sympathetic portrait. In *The Concubine's Children*, Chong suggests that a fairer portrait of May-ying must take into account May-ying's financial and emotional contributions to the family. May-ying's hard work to keep her family in China and in Canada financially afloat, her feminist rebelliousness and independence, and her attempts to insert herself into a traditional domestic family in order to gain the status and financial security denied a teahouse waitress, help enable May-ying's family to survive and even, at times, to prosper, first in China and finally, in Canada. Most significantly, May-ying's efforts ultimately allow Hing, Hing's children, and her grandchildren to become Canadian citizens, something that Chong portrays as May-ying's gift to Hing, "the best gift of all" (259). As Chong's Clifford Sifton lecture suggests, it is partly through adapting multicultural versions of Canadian history that Chong is able to focus on May-ying's forgotten labour and value her for it:

> I believe our stories ultimately tell the story of Canada itself. In all our pasts are an immigrant's beginning, a settler's accomplishments and setbacks, and the confidence of a common future. We all know the struggle and victory, the dreams

> and hopes, the pride and shame. When we tell our stories, we look in the mirror. I believe what we see is that Canada is *not* lacking in heroes . . . . ("Work" 33).

Doing "the work of citizenship" that she advocates in her Clifford Sifton Lecture, in *The Concubine's Children* Chong writes her grandmother's story differently. In this revised view of May-ying, a view that attests to May-ying's importance as the spiritual mother of her Canadian descendants, Chong works to lift the burden of shame Hing feels about her mother and her past.

Chong makes it clear throughout the text that it is May-ying who supports the family – not just because she earns more money, but also because she has a better knowledge of business than Chan Sam does. Chan Sam "had never demonstrated a head for money," Chong writes. "Despite good intentions, Chan Sam had bungled most business decisions" (83-84). When Chan Sam decides to open a family-run business hosting rounds of mah-jongg, it is May-ying who keeps the business going, conversing with customers between rounds, mediating disputed wins and losses, appeasing irate customers when Chan Sam foolishly comments on the tiles players have in their hands (33, 37). While Chan Sam's mah-jongg business is short-lived, May-ying's abilities as a host, along with her diminutive size and beauty, also make her successful as a waitress (28, 57). She gives all her earnings to Chan Sam, including the tips that are hers to keep, in order to meet expenses and to send money home to the family in China (30, 60). She collects used clothing, tea towels, food tins, and other goods to send to China, and she knits sweaters and buys dresses for her girls (59). When Chan Sam returns to China to build the house for his family, he uses only expensive tools brought from Canada, judging the Chinese tools inferior; he heats the kiln for making bricks to such a temperature "that the amount of fuel consumed made the laborers gasp. To them, it was like money being burned" (75). The money being burned comes from May-ying: from her waitressing wages, from the lottery tickets she sells, from the money she borrows to keep Chan Sam in China and thus out of her life for as long as possible, and finally from the casual liaisons she makes with a series of men who pay off her debts in exchange for sexual favours. May-ying works hard to provide for her family, assuming she will be rewarded for her sacrifices in the afterlife (31). However, her efforts are largely overlooked by her family in China. Huangbo "seemed not to know that the money supporting the family and financing the house-building came from the concubine," Chong writes. In any case, such sacrifices would simply be "considered just and honorable, and expected" (76). From her family's perspective, then, May-ying's hard work is unremarkable and thus, easily forgettable.

Both the invisibility of the concubine within official family histories and Chong's subsequent revaluation of May-ying through a focus on her labour are explicitly emphasized on the final page of photographs included at the centre of the text. Drawings of Chan Sam and Huangbo appear at the top of the page; beneath these drawings is a photograph of the impressive house Chan Sam built for his family in Chang Gar Bin. The caption reads: "A drawing of Huangbo and Chan Sam (above) that hangs in the reception room of Yuen's house (below), the house my grandfather built and my grandmother paid for" (n.p.). The house belongs to Yuen, Huangbo's son, by virtue of his gender; May-ying's daughter Ping, on the other hand, does not inherit anything of significance from her father and her surrogate mother, even though Ping was raised by Huangbo as her own daughter. Even more important than the issue of Yuen's material inheritance on this page of photographs, however, is the problem of symbolic inheritance. One portrait, May-ying's, is conspicuously absent. The choice of photographs and text on this page together underline an ironic lacunae in family history: May-ying's portrait does not hang in the reception room of the house bought with her earnings. Thus Yuen's house represents a double loss of female inheritance, a loss that is both material and symbolic. By juxtaposing pictures of the official couple and a photograph of Yuen's house with text that focusses on May-ying's financial contributions, Chong underlines the way official family histories elide the issue of whose labour went into building the house in the first place.

The young Hing sees her mother's traditional "Chineseness" as particularly oppressive and shameful. However, this view of May-ying is continually juxtaposed against a different perspective, one that links May-ying's values, desires, physical comportment, choices, and bodily actions with a growing distance from her "Chinese" homeland. The first time Chan Sam returns home to China, he brings May-ying and their two young daughters with him. The family's "western" look draws much attention in the village of Chang Gar Bin: their apparent accumulation of wealth, signified through the goods and baggage piled on top of the car they arrive in, along with their "western dress" mark the family simultaneously as a foreign curiosity and as a source of hope for those dreaming of Gold Mountain (42). Significantly, the family's visible distance from the villagers who greet them is particularly emphasized in the description of May-ying: "May-ying was immediately dubbed '*Faan-gwei-po*.' With her pale skin, her dress and shoes, she seemed more a 'foreign lady' than Chinese" (42). May-ying's foreignness is written on her body, in the colour of her skin and in clothes that she wears. It is what distinguishes her from Chan Sam's first wife, Huangbo, a woman Chong portrays as a traditional Chinese wife:

> The two women could not have looked more different. One was tall, the other tiny; one had skin darkened and wrinkled by the sun, the other's was like pale silk. One was dull in her cotton tunic and pants – once black but faded from the sun and years of washing to the same color as the gray adobe bricks of the house behind her – and plain-looking with her hair combed back and pinned behind her ears. The other, in her flared dress, nipped in at the waist, her hair bedecked with a satin ribbon, was a splash of color and style. (43)

In Chong's text, May-ying's foreignness is clearly something to be desired. Seeing May-ying's children bouncing in the comfort of an overseas pram, the women in the village suddenly feel the weight of their own children on their backs (42). When May-ying is in China, her apparent distance from economic necessity and her extreme femininity – her tiny body and her sense of colour and style – set her apart as a woman who does not belong in the village. Her colourful femininity distinguishes her from the drab economic necessity that governs Huangbo's life. It is not just May-ying's looks but also her actions that distance her from China and from the "Chineseness" that Huangbo particularly embodies. Huangbo is described as a "model Chinese wife, ever more humble, yielding, diligent" (76); May-ying, on the other hand, refuses to obey her husband or his first wife as she is supposed to do. She will not do her share of the housework, attending school instead (45-46); and she almost boasts to Chan Sam that she could make Huangbo cry (45). In Canada, May-ying's life is always constricted by a lack of money. In China, however, May-ying is transformed – at least through the eyes of the Chinese villagers or, more accurately, through the eyes of the narrator who compares May-ying with Chan Sam's first wife and finds the first wife relatively lacking – into an economically and socially independent woman.

That the colourful femininity Chong underlines at this point in the text is as much a sign of May-ying's distance from Chineseness as it is a sign of any particular gendered role is emphasized by the fluidity of this gender association. When May-ying returns to China with Chan Sam, her colourfully feminine dress marks her as different from Huangbo, a woman generally portrayed as a traditional and submissive Chinese wife. In Canada, on the other hand, May-ying begins to wear American-style men's clothing, and her masculine attire paradoxically also marks her distance from Chinese ways. In "Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature," Sau-ling Cynthia Wong examines the ways in which codes of gender and ethnicity become interlinked in writings by Chinese immigrants to the United States. According to Wong, the texts in her study often use representations of gender to explore issues related to a character's nationality and/or ethnicity: "the characters' actions, depicted along a spectrum of gender appropriateness, are assigned varying shades of 'Chineseness' or 'Americanness' to indicate the extent of their at-homeness in the adopted land" (Wong 114). In one text that Wong examines, for example, a male character who does not feel very at home in North America feels that "strength in a Chinese woman is not only unwomanly but tantamount to ethnic betrayal" (Wong 117). In Chong's text, Chan Sam sees May-ying in similar terms. When May-ying refuses to listen to Chan Sam's request that she temper her gambling habits, Chan Sam complains: "'Look at you. You are so much like a man. A woman does not behave like this'" (173). May-ying's "manliness," or what Chan Sam sees as her betrayal of the codes of behaviour he expects any woman to follow, is embodied in the clothes that she begins to wear, "the man's tie and cap to match" (123). By choosing such clothing, May-ying may be asserting "her rightful place in a man's world," as the autobiographical narrator comments (123). However, May-ying's clothing, selected from a poster illustrating "American Gentleman's Fashions" (123), also suggests that May-ying is asserting her rightful place in North America. Whether she wears masculine or feminine clothing, May-ying's gendered appearance is connected with a certain freedom, prosperity, and flamboyance, qualities that are implicitly coded as Western in the text. May-ying's labour is coded in similar terms, in ways that mark May-ying's apparent distance from China or from Chineseness. In China, she refuses to work, and her refusal indicates that she will not go along with the patriarchal hierarchy established in Chan Sam's household; this rebellion is partly what marks her as a "foreign lady." In Canada, on the other hand, May-ying works hard to support her family, and her work as a teahouse waitress is likewise a marker of her feminist – and Western – independence.

The notable absence of acknowledgement that May-ying contributed anything of worth to her family is repeated by the Chinese half of the family when Denise travels with her mother to meet her relatives overseas in 1987, after a familial separation spanning more than half a century. May-ying is roundly condemned by relatives who barely knew her, if at all (252-53). The relatives' words of scorn ironically convince Hing to see May-ying's waitressing life, for the first time, in a positive way. Focussing on her mother's considerable financial contributions, her unacknowledged responsibilities, her necessary strength and resourcefulness, Hing begins to realize "that the house they cherished as a monument to her father had been built on her mother's back, on the wages and wits of waitressing and the life that came with it. She did not tell them that it stood for everything that had been so misunderstood about her mother, by them and by herself" (255). Although the autobiographical narrator claims that "we were not there to right any wrongs about my grandfather's house" – Hing and Denise do not tell the relatives, in other words, that their version of family history is "incomplete" (253) – the same cannot be said of *The Concubine's Children* itself. On the contrary, the text works to rethink family history in order to revalue May-ying and her waitressing life. Without denying the pain that Hing feels through most of her life, Chong counterposes Hing's earlier condemnation of her mother with a different perspective, one that is presented as more mature or at least more accurately informed: by the end of the text, there is a "truth[ ]" about her mother that Hing finally "underst[ands]" (254).

Although Chong's account of her grandmother's life in *The Concubine's Children* ultimately calls into question the scathingly critical version of it told by the Chinese relatives in 1987, there is at least one part of this story that the narrator particularly endorses, however ambiguously. Ping ends her critique of her biological mother by describing May-ying as a "foreign lady" who did not care about her family in China (253). This description partly emphasizes Ping's early separation from her biological mother: because May-ying lived far away on another continent, Ping barely knew her; May-ying might as well have been a stranger. However, the phrase "foreign lady" also suggests that for Ping, May-ying was in some way literally not Chinese. For Ping, May-ying was someone whose tastes, habits, clothing, beliefs, and values were shaped by her life in Canada rather than by her origins in China. The idea that May-ying belonged more in Canada than in China becomes part of the "truth" that Hing discovers. In *The Concubine's Children*, this truth about May-ying contests Hing's understanding of May-ying's traditional Chineseness by linking May-ying with, and then ultimately dissociating her from, the family overseas. While Ping criticises her biological mother for her apparent lack of devotion to the Chinese family and for her "foreign" ways, Denise and Hing view May-ying's distance from the Chinese half of the family in a much more positive light. For Hing and Denise, the "truth" about May-ying involves not only a revaluation of May-ying's contributions to the family but also a new awareness of the ideological and cultural estrangement that separates May-ying from the "Chinese" relatives they finally have had the opportunity to meet.

Significantly, Hing's new, less judgmental understanding of her mother's life comes precisely at a moment in which both Hing and the autobiographical narrator distance themselves from their Chinese relatives. Although Hing now knows the "truth" about her mother, she decides not to share it with her relatives overseas, since this knowledge

> would have undone what had sustained the Chinese family through hard and trying times, what had given them a reason to carry on. Events had more than evened the score. She decided it was better to let them believe that her mother brought their father only unhappiness, and that the other mother who had raised them had been the superior wife. (254)

The distinction between the "truth" May-ying's Canadian daughter and granddaughter know and the myths, half-truths, or superstitions that sustain the Chinese half of the family is one in a series of implied oppositions that set the Chinese relatives apart from their Western counterparts. The Chinese relatives live in cramped quarters, for example, with pigs freely roaming the house (245, 251); they eat dog and cat, a habit their Western relatives find repugnant (251, 257-58); and according to Ping, they do not allow women to speak out (257). The paragraphs immediately following Hing's moment of revelation about her mother underscore the notion of a fundamental difference between the two halves of the family by focussing on the Chinese relatives' superstitious beliefs. These beliefs are presented as metonymic of a "Chinese" value system from which Hing and Denise ultimately distance themselves, a traditional and patriarchal ideology that has at its heart the continuing devaluation of May-ying. May-ying's second daughter, Nan, was brutally raped and killed by Japanese soldiers during the Sino-Japanese War; however, the Chinese half of the family worry more about the fact that Nan died unmarried than about the brutality of her death – a perspective the autobiographical narrator clearly does not share (139, 255). During Hing's and Denise's visit decades after Nan's death, the Chinese relatives arrange with another family who had lost two sons to "let the dead marry the dead" (255). At a seance in which Nan speaks to the family through a spirit medium, May-ying's long-dead daughter criticises her biological mother, echoing the sentiments expressed by the rest of the Chinese family: "'Yuen's mother liked me, but my mother never liked me and that's why I did not live long'" (255). In China, even the dead condemn May-ying, blaming her for the family's terrible fortune; even the dead think May-ying did not measure up. Such superstitious beliefs may help the Chinese half of the family carry on, but their reliance on such beliefs, the narrator's ironic reporting of these events suggests, also shields them from the "truth" that Hing finally understands.

Although her parents always seemed to be turned toward China, although they continually made sacrifices for the sake of the Chinese side of the family while at the same time neglecting their Canadian family, Hing finally decides that what her parents – and particularly her mother –

won for their Canadian daughter is freedom *from* China: "her parents' act of immigration to the new world and her mother's determination in pregnancy to chance the journey by sea had been her liberation, the best gift of all" (259). From the perspective afforded her in China, Hing finally sees May-ying as a good mother whose greatest legacy is the "Westernness" she passes on to her Canadian daughter. During a meal with their Chinese hosts, Hing and Denise share "a glance of disapproval at the sight of the fly struggling to pull itself free from the eyeball of a fish, and at our relatives spitting bones and refuse onto the floor at their feet" (258). This disapproving glance emphasizes the refuse and squalor Denise and Hing see around them, both in the food their relatives ingest and in their bodily habits; it is a glance that reiterates early twentieth-century white stereotypes of the Chinese as "dirty." Moreover, this disapproval comparatively identifies Denise and Hing as Western women: watching their relatives spitting bones and refuse onto the floor, Denise and her mother feel "a hankering for our western ways" (258). This "Westernness" is something that the Chinese half of the family yearn for: Yuen hopes to get his children "out of China to take root in Canada" (260). However, it is something they do not have access to and cannot understand. "Events had more than evened the score," Chong writes, presumably leaving Hing with a clearer understanding of her mother as well as with a better lot in life.

While the young Hing finds May-ying's sexual liaisons with wealthier men including her ongoing relationship with Chow Guen both painful and confusing, by the end of the text these liaisons are implicitly redefined within the rubric of Western modernity.[14] Noting that the Chinese and Canadian sides of the family understood the notion of "family" differently, Chong writes: "Mother's sense of family was fashioned in a more modern world of choice, where romantic love played more of a hand in fate. With my father's help, she had struggled free of the familial obligation and sacrifice that bound the Chinese side" (265). Although it is her own mother that the autobiographical narrator refers to here, and although the credit for Hing's sense of family is attributed to her husband's romantic influence, as Chong attests earlier in the text, it is May-ying who first enters this "modern world of choice." May-ying refuses to remain in an unhappy marriage. Instead, she leaves her patriarchal husband behind and takes a series of lovers of her own choosing. When she decides to live with Chow Guen, Chan Sam proposes "to do what he would have done had he been in China, sell her to another man" (125). However, May-ying refuses to participate in this exchange: "I am not for sale. You are such a greedy man. How could you?! He'll never pay you, and I'll do exactly what I want to do" (125). In some ways, May-ying manages to shape her family exactly in the way she wishes, following her own heart rather than fulfilling the unhappy family duties that appear to be her lot when she becomes Chan Sam's concubine. After repeatedly giving birth to unwanted daughters, May-ying convinces Chow Guen to provide her with enough money to adopt a son, an expensive transaction in her Chinatown community (115-16); without going through a wedding, May-ying manages to wear Chow Guen's diamond ring on her left-hand ring finger, and she commissions a photograph in which the two appear together "in the image of man and wife," a photograph that has an honoured place on her dresser throughout her life (125-26); at the same time, she asserts her feminist independence by

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[14] The implicit link Chong makes between May-ying's sexual liaisons and a kind of cultural modernization echoes discourses on prostitution and modernity that circulated in early twentieth-century China. In "Modernizing Sex, Sexing Modernity," Gail Hershatter examines the ways in which prostitution was variously understood in early twentieth-century Shaghai as, among other things, a source of urbanized pleasures and a marker of national decay (147). During this period in China, according to Hershatter, "prostitution was invoked in urgent public discussions about what kind of sex and gender relations could help to constitute a modern nation in a threatening semicolonial situation" (147-48). Some social commentators from the May Fourth movement felt

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that the elimination of prostitution would help to mark China's move "from backwardness to modernity" (162-63). By the 1930s, on the other hand, many intellectuals felt that prostitution itself was "a badge of modernity" (165). For these intellectuals, both prostitution and the intent to eliminate it marked China's participation in "a human march toward a civilized, moral society" (166).

"setting a course independent of either" Chan Sam or Chow Guen (125). By contrasting Hing's notion of family with that of her overseas relatives at the end of the text, then, Chong retrospectively rewrites what is only baffling and painful for the young Hing as a step toward a desired "modern world of choice," a step that Hing's mother is the first to take.

According to the version of her mother's story that Chong tells in *The Concubine's Children*, one of the greatest sources of Hing's lifelong pain was the fact that "neither of her parents had shown much care or love for her" (241). However, this pain is a transposition of what may be an even deeper source of Hing's shame and unhappiness in the text, a source that Chong only hints at in *The Concubine's Children*. In the earlier short story version, the roles in this loveless relationship are reversed. Before her healing visit to China, Hing "had felt only the shame of her deprived childhood in Canada, the errant ways of her mother, the fact that *both of her parents had gone to their graves unloved by her*" ("Concubine's" 61, emphasis added). The lack of love for her "Chinese" parents is perhaps the most painful, if also perhaps the most repressed, part of Hing's history. Moreover, this personal history has its roots in a larger multicultural discourse: a lack of love for racial and ethnic immigrant ancestors in Canada is perhaps one of the most repressed parts of Canada's multicultural dream. In the short story version, Hing's realization that her parents "endowed her with the gift of a life in Canada" turned Hing's "shame to gratitude and made her own life at last all of one piece" (61). This rewriting of herself, her mother, and her personal history as somehow clean, unsullied, and intact is repeated at a symbolic level in *The Concubine's Children*. Near the end of Hing's and Denise's visit with their Chinese relatives, Yuen finds a coat that used to belong to Hing (2-3). The coat no longer fits (3, 257), and Hing finally gives it away to her relatives: "Mother left the brown knit coat with the velvet-trimmed collar behind in Chang Gar Bin. It seemed that it still belonged in China, where the threads of my grandfather's hopes were still woven in his children's dreams"

(261). For Hing and for the autobiographical narrator, the coat provides a bridge between the two halves of the family that have been so long divided (3, 257). However, in a text that also describes how a coat only painfully symbolized the way Hing felt "tarnished" by her mother (144), the gesture of leaving the coat behind in China surely has another, more troubling meaning. In *The Concubine's Children*, the shame Hing feels about her mother cannot be entirely eradicated; given the discursive and material conditions that have shaped and continue to shape Hing's life, the sense of tarnish that she feels can only be displaced.

At one level, *The Concubine's Children* provides a non-threatening version of multicultural difference that public sector managers and mainstream Canadians can take comfort in, no doubt contributing to the book's popular appeal: already published in six countries by 1995, *The Concubine's Children* was awarded the Vancouver Book Prize and the Edna Staebler Prize for creative fiction, and it was shortlisted for a Governor General's Award (Chong, "Work" 33). *The Concubine's Children* works to reiterate dominant multicultural discourses in a number of ways. Although May-ying and Chan-Sam find mostly broken dreams in Canada, Chong underlines the idea of Canada as a land of promise for all immigrants by suggesting that her grandparents' dreams are fulfilled in the lives of their descendants. In order to mitigate Hing's negative view of May-ying, Chong suggests that Canada itself is the gift that May-ying gives her Canadian daughter, since the family members left behind in China do not have access to the middle-class lifestyle that Hing eventually acquires. Chong makes this contrast explicit: Hing's "five children were university-educated and living their own lives. Ping and Yuen . . . could nurture only faint hopes that their children or their children's children might escape a peasant's lot" (260). Although Chong examines the tremendous racism her grandparents experienced in Canada, she also suggests that this racism has diminished. Unlike her parents and grandparents, Denise and her siblings "had to clear just one early hurdle – neighbors not used to 'Orientals' on the block" (218). Once her parents made it clear to other parents that abuse would not be tolerated, "Acceptance and friendship soon followed, and we ourselves soon forgot that we were any different from our white playmates" (218). This notion of diminishing racism clearly echoes the dominant multicultural idea that all racial ethnic groups in Canada are already equal and that all groups essentially resemble each other because they are treated the same way in a country that values diversity. At the same time, when Denise and her siblings forget that they are "different," that difference is still invisibly present as a threatening trace that could emerge at any moment, with the potential to disrupt their amiable play. Whiteness becomes the standard to measure against here, since it is Denise and her siblings who are "different," not the white children who play with them. In order for friendship and acceptance to occur, a threatening Chinese difference needs to disappear.

In *The Concubine's Children*, May-ying's body remains a site of profound distress and unease. For Hing and for the autobiographical narrator in the text, May-ying's body is an ambivalent space where "Chinese" and "Canadian" uneasily and impossibly meet, overlap, and contest with one another. At the same time, this struggle sometimes is understandably muted in the text, transposed into a love of Canadianness that can allow for a much-needed love of May-ying. While *The Concubine's Children* might at some level seem comforting to those who do not wish to disrupt a hierarchical status quo, then, it also potentially threatens this comfort by showing the displacement of racialized bodies necessary to perpetuate an illusion of seamless equality in Canada. Chong's autobiographical text precisely shows the sacrifice necessary for the construction of Chinese Canadian identities within the rubric of contemporary Canadian multiculturalism. In *The Concubine's Children*, a socially constructed "Chinese" difference that Hing sees in her immigrant mother is ultimately displaced onto the overseas relatives left behind in China. "You're Canadian, not Chinese. Stop trying to feel something," Hing instructs her daughter when Denise travels to China in the 1980s (Chong, *Concubine's* 238). Hing's words suggest that there are limits to acceptable diversity in Canada's multicultural society. Her words suggest that the terms "Chinese" and "Canadian" are somehow at odds, that a choice must be made, and that some differences must be left behind in order to be included in the pages of what Chong has called "the Canadian family album" ("Work" 33). At times, the clash between "Chinese" and "Canadian" in *The Concubine's Children* is at least partly occluded by a dominant multicultural narrative that seems to resolve the differences between the two by firmly reinforcing the Canadianness of the autobiographer's family. However, to read only the multicultural strand of the text is to miss the messy embodied narrative Chong so stunningly and painfully represents. Dominant multicultural discourses cannot account for the acute bodily troubles and affective dilemmas represented in *The Concubine's Children*. The "work of citizenship" that Chong refers to in her Clifford Sifton lecture thus may involve leaving behind any differences that might be potentially divisive, any differences that apparently do not contribute to Canada's identity as a tolerant multicultural nation. In writing one story of bodies caught within a multicultural paradigm, then, Chong reveals the inadequacies of the discourses of national inclusiveness that frame her troubling family history.

In the next chapter, "'her own white face': Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*," I explore another text in which something must be left behind in order to sustain the notion of an inclusive Canadian nation. In *Ghost Works*, however, it is not a racialized other that must be left behind, but rather whiteness itself, the whiteness of the central figure's relatives that the autobiographical "she/i" does not wish to see reflected in herself. While the projection of an unwanted embodiment occurs in both texts, this projection works in very different ways. As I will show in the following chapter, Marlatt's *Ghost Works* begins not so much with an unequal Canadian past that needs revision, but rather with the possibility of Canada as a kind of *tabula rasa* that can erase a white colonialism the autobiographical "she/i" believes, or wishes to believe, can only happen elsewhere.

CHAPTER TWO

"her own white face": Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*

> Their faces hang in the dusk like fruit off a tree. She is standing on their land talking to them. On her left the man bends slightly over a stick or the handle of a pitchfork. To her right the two women and the girl - their faces float up towards her in the dusk, hardly aware, it seems, of what she sees as startling: daughter, mother, grandmother clustered together like so many berries on the one bush - all staring, simply, at her own white face.
>
> Daphne Marlatt, *Ghost Works* (5)

Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works* begins with an enigmatic dream sequence in which the central autobiographical figure is travelling through unknown country, lost, unable to find her way, uncertain, even, about what exactly she is looking for or where she is headed. The road she is travelling along is dusty, the pavement beneath her feet when she steps out of her car is hot, and night is falling, making it difficult to see what is around her (2-5). Searching for directions or more generally for some kind of spiritual guidance or help reading the unreadable signs around her - the construction signs she has just passed, for example, mark some kind of restricted area, and the print is written in "some native language," too small to read (4) - she turns to ask some local inhabitants for assistance. However, what she finds standing on their land is "startling," not at all what she expected to find. Instead of directions, she finds a family of presumably brown faces (the dream precedes a journey to Mexico) "staring, simply, at her own white face" (5). In a moment that reverses the traditional ethnographic gaze, brown faces stare at a white face. Looking through the eyes of the family staring back at her, the white traveller sees herself as racialized, defined in some uncomfortable and alienating way by race. Although the woman assumes that her gender will create a connection with the women before her and allow her to communicate with them, she is disappointed: while the three generations of women stand off to one side away from the man with the pitchfork, the white traveller is still separate from them; she expects that one of the women will explain something to her "out of sympathy," but the woman remains silent (5). The only reply the traveller receives is a visual one, and the vision confirms that the moment of racialization has to do with embodiment, with ways of perceiving or experiencing different bodies, faces, or skins. In the stillness, the family "continue to watch her face," and a grotesque figure comes into view behind them, a flayed animal with its skin "nailed there for someone to see" (5-6). Like the dead animal, the white woman is highly visible, something to be looked at by those who stand on this turf. The invitation to stare at the dead animal's skin underlines, once again, the traveller's preoccupation with skin or skin colour as a significant marker of race. The exchange ends after the old woman says something about the power of the sea and the power of the dwarfs acting together – another unreadable sign – and the man tells her that they cannot help her, she must go back (6). While the autobiographical traveller later sees this exchange as a powerful one, at the moment of contact, the woman's whiteness brings only failure and confusion. She does not know where she is, and she cannot find her bearings; the native family cannot help her; and she cannot bridge the gap that separates her from them. Her own whiteness, so often invisible to white people, becomes uncomfortably strange to her and, like the skin of the flayed animal that comes into view before her, perhaps even grotesque.

In *Ghost Works*, a collection of three previously published travel writings, Marlatt turns the traveller's curious gaze back not only on herself, but also on the personal and collective histories of family, community, and nation that travel with her, exploring what it means to be white or, more specifically, to be a white Canadian woman from a colonial British family moving through very different social spaces.[1] The three travel narratives take the central autobiographical figure to Mexico, to her childhood home in Malaysia, and to her ancestral home in England respectively, so the collection is a recording of very diverse selves and places. All three texts focus on the significance of place in the construction of meaning: "Each work," Marlatt notes in the preface, "struggles with the notion of here, what being here means, what it includes or excludes" (vii). Significantly, the places she explores are not discrete, but rather each is overlaid with meanings drawn from other places, times, and selves: "Heterogenous, this place here, so overlaid with other places: this self here sieved through with other selves when there was here and you were, you are, me" (viii). As the traveller moves from one place to another, she also learns about the homes and home countries, both past and present, that she never really left behind. Throughout *Ghost Works*, the central autobiographical figure finds herself repeating the bodily scripts, daily gestures, obsessional fears, and unconscious anxieties she has learned from her family and from local and global communities that have shaped her. Realizing with frustration that her role is always already scripted for her long before she steps into various scenes, she struggles to bring to consciousness the ways in which racist and imperialist practices, beliefs, and cross-cultural interactions continue to haunt the present – including her present incarnation as a travelling and uncomfortably white Canadian self.

In her preface to *Ghost Works*, Marlatt notes that the word "ghost" in the title refers to a kind of historical haunting, a scripting of lives and selves that seem, from the limited vantage of the present, to be unscripted, unencumbered by past ways of being: "And so we keep reinventing ourselves, without models (or so we think). Our histories ghostly. And ghosts, who are hungry for recognition as we know, return, return. . . ." (viii). In *Ghost Works*, ghostly histories return to shape the present. The word "ghost" suggests a force beyond merely cerebral memories, for it underlines that the past enters into the present in a bodily way. Ghosts are insubstantial figures, and yet they are also, at the same time, curiously embodied: as human figures or forms that rise from what seems like a long-dead past, they carry a memory of the body even when the body itself has disappeared. For Marlatt, these bodily memories appear in language that is always material, always carrying traces of past ways of being. As Marlatt puts it elsewhere, "Ghosts are those who occupy a place, but not in the flesh, those who are left with only the memory-trace of it on their tongues" (*Taken* 7). Words themselves are "haunted," Marlatt insists in one interview, and recovering words that were used in a different place or time is "like looking in a mirror," but one that reflects, "like a visitation," a past way of being ("Blue" 45, 46). For Marlatt, then, the word "ghost" underlines the way previous forms of embodiment haunt the present through discourses that preserve traces of the past, a past always remembered in and through the body. This past is both individual and collective, local and international: individual bodies are haunted by other ghostly bodies, and supposedly new nations such as Canada are haunted by the ghosts of other places.

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[1] The three travel writings are *Zócalo* (Toronto: Coach House, 1977); "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts," *Capilano Review* 16-17 (1979): 45-95; and *How Hug a Stone* (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1983).

In Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, bodies are racialized, and the word "ghost" partly does the work of distinguishing the autobiographical self from a kind of whiteness she abhors through recourse to the idea of Canada as a space of white innocence. Marlatt is not the first writer to connect whiteness with ghostliness. Maxine Hong Kingston refers to white people as ghosts in *The Woman Warrior*; Mudrooroo uses the word "ghost" in a similar way in *Master of the Ghost*; and according to Elizabeth Abel, Alice Walker likewise "represents whiteness as 'the hideous personal deficiency' of having no skin, of being 'a ghost.'"[2] What is interesting about Marlatt's use of the word "ghost" is that the traveller does not identify with ghostliness. Amazed by the petty lives of British colonials in Malaysia, she asserts her difference from these white people by calling them ghosts: "These are the ghosts, they offer ghost food, & if i stayed here & partook of it long enough i'd become a ghost too" (107). Ghostliness here is both a mode of embodiment and a way to become disembodied: ghost food is insubstantial food, and becoming a ghost entails an unwanted transformation or even a disappearance of self. Reading ghostliness as whiteness, I suggest the passage articulates one of the central concerns about race, nation, and embodiment that runs through *Ghost Works*. While the traveller longs to see whiteness as a form of embodiment that can be escaped by moving to a different, supposedly less colonizing place such as Canada, the implied place of comparison in this passage, she finds that whiteness continues to haunt her, despite her best efforts to distance herself from it. For the autobiographical narrator, the "ghosts" she encounters in Malaysia, like a number of other white people in the text, are alienated from the people and the world around them. This alienated way of being in the world is something she longs to disassociate herself from, although she finds, repeatedly, that she cannot do so either easily or completely.

This chapter looks at how Marlatt represents whiteness in *Ghost Works*. In this text, Marlatt complicates the popular notion that Canada is somehow more racially innocent than other nations. No matter how much she would like to believe her family's move to Canada purged her of a racial guilt that continues to haunt her, the white immigrant traveller in *Ghost Works* ultimately realizes that she is not more innocently white than others she meets simply because she identifies herself as a Canadian. This realization is not an easy one to make, however, for

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[2] Abel 259; Abel is quoting Alice Walker, *The Temple of My Familiar* (San Diego, 1989): 360.

Marlatt's text also powerfully suggests how alluring this dream of white innocence can be for someone who wishes to rid herself of a ghostly colonial identity. Indeed, in *Ghost Works* Canada is sometimes coded as a raceless place, a place where "*everybody* wears jeans" and so everyone is equal and free, at least compared to more overtly colonial spaces such as the traveller's childhood home in British Malaya (143). However, *Ghost Works* ultimately suggests a more complex view of nation, race, and embodiment than this, since places bleed into one another in the text, and both words and bodies carry memories that cannot simply be sloughed off at will. For the traveller, being white ultimately involves a complex bodily inheritance, an incorporation of embodied gestures and practices into a life that can never be free from previous colonial scripts, no matter how detached from past ways of being her present life might seem. Colonial scripts, in other words, do not simply vanish in the movement from one nation to another, or from old world to new. In *Ghost Works*, the traveller's desire to see Canada as a radically egalitarian nation is repeatedly challenged by a stubborn bodily inheritance that comes directly into conflict with her own nationalist longings.

Whiteness

Whiteness is represented unevenly in *Ghost Works*. Travelling down the streets of Penang with her sister, feeling "separate & visible" in a hired trisha pedalled by "an incredibly skinny man," the autobiographical narrator wonders: "Is this the only way to be a white woman here? Or is this the condition of being a member of an exploitive & foreign moneyed class?" (93). Whiteness is explicitly highlighted in passages such as this one or the one quoted at the beginning of this chapter. At the same time, even as the autobiographical narrator speaks of race here, she displaces its specificity by equating it almost entirely with nationality (foreignness) and with class position. In other parts of the text, the central figure's awareness of whiteness dissolves into the various roles she plays as a white woman traveller: she is a North American, a tourist, a "liberated" Canadian woman, or a "wild colonial[ ]" child, cousin of a traditionally British family (100, 133) – all roles which implicitly gesture toward whiteness or toward her dissociation from a whiteness she finds loathsome. At still other times, whiteness is displaced in a different way: the central figure's white skin or the whiteness of her family drops into metaphor. The final travel narrative, for example, is framed by curious references to a "white stone lady reclined on her stone couch at the foot of the garden at the end of the Empire, in an attitude of elegant attentiveness" (185). In a passage that links an elegant white lady with Empire, the interconnected codes of whiteness, gender, elite British manners, and imperialism – issues I will explore further – are hard to miss. What I wish to underline at this point, however, is the indirectness of reference to whiteness here: whiteness is relocated from descriptions of the autobiographical traveller's own skin colour to the colour of an inanimate object lying silently in an English garden. Whiteness is something separate from the traveller here, an inert and unchanging entity that seems to have nothing to do with the young Canadian girl the traveller remembers romping around the quiet English garden. It is a kind of quaint oddity, a relic from a bygone era, dead and chalky, statue rather than ghost. Part of an antiquated British colonialism, whiteness is dead and lifeless, apparently unable to touch the autobiographical self. On the other hand, the very presence of the white stone lady as a solid and immovable object found in the midst of the child's free play suggests a continual haunting by whiteness. Whiteness is something the traveller often recognizes in others, including ghostly echoes of her dead mother in the elegant statue, but is loathe to recognize in her supposedly liberated and modern Canadian self. For the autobiographical traveller, then, whiteness is something that is forced upon her consciousness at times, while at other times – or even, paradoxically, at precisely the same textual moment that whiteness is in some way highlighted – issues of racialization fade quietly and curiously into the background.

In this section, I turn to contemporary scholarship on the invisibility of whiteness to provide theoretical grounds for my argument that the way whiteness appears and disappears in *Ghost Works* is central both to the traveller's dream of white Canadian innocence as well as to the dissolution of this dream. Marlatt does not concern herself in *Ghost Works* with Canada's atrocious record of racial inequity, as Chong does in *The Concubine's Children*, and markers of race in *Ghost Works* are not always easy to see. Indeed, some of the most important moments of racialization in *Ghost Works* occur, rather paradoxically, precisely at moments when race is not explicitly highlighted, and the contemporary theorization of whiteness as a social force that is both everywhere and nowhere at once helps me to explain why this might be so. In one significant passage that I will examine more closely later in the chapter, for example, the autobiographical traveller has what she considers a "real" conversation with a Mexican hammock seller after numerous failed attempts to touch the lives of other local people. Although Canadianness is mentioned only in passing, and whiteness is not mentioned at all in this passage, I will argue that this textual moment is central to the traveller's identification of herself as a different kind of white person because she is Canadian, one who can reach out to local Mexicans after all. This passage reveals the traveller's desire to see herself as more egalitarian because she is Canadian; at the same time, throughout *Ghost Works* whiteness continues to haunt her. In order to show how this haunting works, it is crucial to consider the way whiteness functions indirectly both in Marlatt's text and, more generally, in Canadian discourses of national inclusiveness, where white invisibility is reinforced through discourses that construct Canada as a morally superior nation, free from racial tensions that always occur elsewhere.

In *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (55). Along with other contemporary theorists of race, Omi and Winant underline the point that race is not simply an essence, something rooted in the body and unchanging over time (54). Indeed, as David Theo Goldberg observes, one important theoretical pursuit in studies of racism is the examination of "the history of *race formation*, that is, the transformation over time in what gets to count as a race, how racial membership is determined, and what sorts of exclusion this entails" (xii). Significantly, however, as Omi and Winant's definition of race suggests, references to different types of bodies - however much these differences are both socially and historically constructed - have remained central to definitions of race well past the nineteenth century, when biological notions of race were at their heyday. The centrality of embodiment to changing definitions of race is crucial, I believe, to the second theoretical pursuit that Goldberg underlines, namely the demonstration of "how social agents are defined or define themselves as racial subjects" and the analysis of "what sorts of social subjection this entails" both for those who produce and those who are subjected to notions of racial difference (xii). In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the autobiographical traveller in *Ghost Works* imagines herself as a racialized subject. I argue that the traveller turns to idealized notions of "Canadianness" in order to escape a personal and collective history of colonial whiteness that she finds herself entangled in but that she desperately wishes to disavow. Although she wishes to see racialization as something that happens elsewhere and whiteness as something that she can leave behind her when she steps into the new and better nation that she imagines Canada to be, she finds she cannot leave behind a colonial history of embodiment that has shaped her in ways that are sometimes nearly invisible to her. As she travels, she begins to realize, however unevenly, the myriad small ways in which her body has been racially formed, a formation that does not disappear simply because she identifies herself as a Canadian.

As recent scholarship on whiteness affirms, the study of whiteness and embodiment is a pursuit fraught with difficulty: since whiteness is considered the norm, white bodies tend to disappear from view both in everyday interactions as well as in contemporary studies of race. In "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity," Robyn Wiegman points to the emergence of what he refers to as "the academy's latest and – in nearly everyone's opinion – rather confounding antiracist venture, whiteness studies" (121). As Wiegman's comment suggests, whiteness studies has emerged only recently. One of the important precursors of whiteness studies is critical race theory, a body of scholarship which emerged in the late 1970s in the aftermath of the civil rights era (Delgado and Stephancic xviii). Other critical antecedents include feminist, materialist, and postcolonial work from the late 1970s and early 1980s (Hill 4). Although these related areas of study laid the groundwork for the critical examination of race over twenty years ago, the real explosion of whiteness studies has taken place only in the last few years. One reason for this late emergence may be the very invisibility of whiteness investigated in much of the new whiteness scholarship. As Fine et al. put it, many scholars "have so fetishized 'people of color' as the 'problem to be understood'" that whiteness "has evaporated beyond study" (ix). In *White*, film theorist Richard Dyer suggests that white power reproduces itself largely because whiteness is equated with being normal (10). According to Dyer, the colour white is conceptualized in Western culture as the absence of colour, making it easier for white people to see themselves as "unmarked, unspecific, universal" (45); at the same time, whiteness is often associated with positive qualities such as "purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity" (72). As Dyer's work shows, "whiteness" functions unlike other racial classifications in that it is often equated with racelessness; at the same time, the privileges associated with white skin are reinforced both symbolically by dominant understandings of the word "white" as well as materially by social institutions and practices that reproduce white power on a daily basis.

Since whiteness functions largely as an "unmarked marker," as Frankenberg puts it ("Local Whitenesses" 16), one important project within contemporary whiteness studies is to make white bodies visible. However, this visibility in itself does not guarantee a progressive challenge to an inequitable social order. Indeed, a number of scholars have noted some of the dangers involved in studying whiteness. In their preface to *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*, Fine et al. worry that "a terrifying academic flight toward something called white studies could eclipse the important work being done across the range of race, postcolonialism, ethnicity, and 'people of color'" (xi-xii). In his introduction to *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, Hill likewise asks, "Is the new whiteness studies just an attempt to 'lactify' ethnic difference and stay relevant in these lean, mean times of liquid cultural capital?" (12). Dyer points to the problem of what he calls "me-too-ism": amid growing attention to non-white subjects, he argues, the study of whiteness can simply be used as an excuse to place all the attention on white people once again (10). In her analysis of the construction of whiteness within Chicana/o critical discourses, Angie Chabram-Dernersesian asks whether the study of whiteness might be "a dangerous waste of time" (109). Her questions about the politics of whiteness studies echo concerns voiced by Dyer and others: "Why focus on whiteness and dominant white identities within a social formation that privileges them on a daily basis and does so to the detriment of other social and political identities?" (Chabram-Dernersesian 108).

Despite the risks, I believe it is important to bring careful analyses of white embodiment into discussions of contemporary racism and modes of racialization. "To speak of whiteness," Frankenberg notes, is "to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism" (*White Women* 6). This is especially important in the Canadian context, where the invisibility of whiteness seems to be particularly entrenched, at least according to some contemporary Canadian cultural theorists. As the Canadian Race Relations Foundation notes in a report by Jennifer Roy, "The myth that Canada is a land in which human rights have always been protected and respected is so deeply ingrained in the minds of Canadians that there is often a refusal to acknowledge that Canada has a racist history, which has been echoed in modern policies" (1). Indo-Canadian literary critic Arun Mukherjee suggests that "Canadian is a code word for white" (434); Afro-Canadian poet and writer Dionne Brand likewise argues that "Canadian national identity is necessarily predicated on whiteness" ("Who"18). According to George Elliott Clarke, an Afro-Canadian literary critic and poet, "There are plenty of white liberals in Canada, but little white liberal guilt: Canadians do not believe that they have committed any racial sins for which they should atone. If anything, they are self-righteous in maintaining their innocence" (101-02). Such statements work both to draw attention to and to contest a pervasive myth of Canada as an inclusive society where racism does not exist. White legal scholar Constance Backhouse points out that "there is as yet no book explicitly devoted to a study of 'whiteness' in Canadian history" (13). Ideas of race in Canada as elsewhere have changed over the years, she notes, with a shift toward understanding race not as a biological given but rather in terms of "social, political, economic, and geographic factors" (6). Despite historically changing notions of race, however, Backhouse underlines one relatively enduring notion about race in Canada: the idea that Canada is essentially raceless, a discourse, she shows, that has roots reaching back to the early part of the twentieth century. According to Backhouse, the Canadian legal system in the first half of the twentieth century "contributed to the fostering of the ideology of Canada as a 'raceless' nation," and she cites "the largely erroneous presumption that our country is primarily 'raceless'" as a distinctive feature of Canada's racial history (13). Brand refers to this notion of racelessness in Canada as a kind of "stupefying innocence" (Brand *Bread* 178; qtd. in Backhouse 14). This idea of Canadian racelessness takes place, I suggest here, alongside the disappearance of white bodies in dominant Canadian discourses of national inclusiveness: there are no white bodies here, in other words, because race apparently does not exist in Canada. In dominant discourses of national inclusiveness this racelessness is often posited at the same time that white embodiment is reinforced as the unspoken and unspeakable norm. This discourse of racelessness, along with the corresponding disappearance of white bodies, is both underlined and contested in Marlatt's *Ghost Works*.

One striking public assertion of Canadian racelessness that simultaneously constructed whiteness as unspoken norm and white people as racially innocent bystanders was the media frenzy that accompanied the Vancouver "Writing thru Race" conference in 1994, a conference that limited enrollment to "First Nations writers and writers of colour" (Miki 144). Roy Miki suggests that media reports constructed race in terms that emphasized white Canadian innocence: "innocent whites excluded on the basis of *their* race versus self-centred writers of colour using 'taxpayer' funds to segregate themselves" (146). These representations of whiteness served the double purpose of marginalizing non-white writers as deviant while at the same time suggesting that the Canadian norm is one of raceless integration, a norm that taxpayers, presumed white, would want to defend by withholding their tax dollars from such an event. That such media representations of an innocent and injured Canadian whiteness ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of federal funding for a rare gathering of non-white writers suggests how urgent the project of rethinking whiteness in Canada is. Representations of whiteness such as the ones cited by Miki have material effects, and both the representations themselves and the political aftermath form part of the racist structures that the myth of white Canadian innocence itself works hard to deny.

Marlatt herself was interested in uncovering notions of supposed white neutrality just a few years before the 1993 publication of *Ghost Works*. In her introduction to *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures*, Marlatt underlines the difficult struggle she and her co-editors went through to transform the 1988 Vancouver conference of the same name into a book (9). Through the conference itself and through discussions among the four editors that took place for a year and a half following the conference, Marlatt painfully came to realize that inclusiveness is not always as easy as it seems: "i would not again presume to organize a conference, even in part, *for* women of colour," Marlatt writes. "The time is overdue for women of colour to have organizing power themselves, though this is difficult to attain with limited means" (15). She was shocked by the depths of differences that she did not expect, often supposing her own position to be neutral: "At first it was a shock to realize that what i took as a given, whether we were talking about a grammatical issue such as the use of pronouns, or an editing issue such as whether to cut or include a particular comment from the audience and why, only reflected *my* set of cultural assumptions" (18; emphasis in original). The conference, which drew prominent Native, Asian-Canadian, and lesbian women writers in Canada together, was fuelled by "a certain idealism," according to Marlatt, yet "the trouble with idealism . . . is that it can overlook the pain of real differences in oppression for the sake of some fantasized solidarity" ("Introduction" 13). The glossing over of differences and the unexamined normativity of whiteness which surprised Marlatt as she worked closely with Asian-Canadian writer Sky Lee and Native writer Lee Maracle, two of her co-editors, is something explored in her much earlier travel texts, republished as *Ghost Works* just three years after the conference proceedings were completed.

While some might suggest that the crisis of race surrounding the 1994 "Writing thru Race" conference was an isolated incident precipitated, in part, by the thorny issue of defining exactly who belongs in the category "writers of colour," Eva Mackey's analysis of contemporary discourses of Canadianness suggests that this incident forms part of a larger pattern whereby whiteness in Canada continues to be the unspoken norm. In *The House of Difference*, Eva Mackey examines the ways in which "present-day public discourses of Canadianness" underline a discourse of multicultural tolerance while at the same time reinforcing the "unmarked and normative status of white Canadians" (105-06). A social anthropologist, Mackey contrasts two small-town Ontario summer festivals she attended in 1992 in order to show the ways in which ideas of valuing cultural difference exist alongside "a notion of Canadianness in which the real and authoritative Canadian people are defined as white, culturally unmarked and assimilated *Canadian*-Canadians" (106; emphasis in original). The Waterfront Festival, Mackey notes, was "made up of a series of cultural events that were unmarked as either Canadian or white" (93). However, it was attended mostly by white middle-class families who, Mackey argues persuasively, ultimately projected themselves as representative of the nation (92-94). The second festival, held two weeks later in the same park, was a Canada Day celebration designed to showcase multicultural difference. As Mackey interviewed white Canadians who attended the festival, she found that celebrations of cultural difference slid repeatedly into discussions of the limits of tolerable diversity. As one participant angrily put it, "'Do you know that you can get multicultural funding for absolutely every nationality except Canadian? *Canadian*-Canadian?'" (104). The shock and surprise of whiteness for the autobiographical traveller in *Ghost Works* in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter is symptomatic, then, of a larger trend in Canada in which whiteness continues to be imagined as either benign or innocent, when it is imagined at all. In *Ghost Works*, the notion that perhaps whiteness is not so innocent simply because it is Canadian is surprising, perhaps even shocking – an uncomfortable realization forced on the autobiographical self as she participates in the colonial process of travel.

Although the word "white" does not always explicitly appear – indeed, references to whiteness are spread unevenly throughout the text – the traveller's whiteness and the whiteness (or non-whiteness) of her family, her friends, or her community shape the autobiographical self as well as her sometimes difficult relationships with various others in the text. In *Zócalo*, as the central figure travels through Mexico, her whiteness is measured in terms of her distance from the land and from the people she cannot really touch or understand. Whiteness involves both lassitude and privileged enclosure in "Month of Hungry Ghosts." Behind the iron gates that protect her childhood home from dangerous (non-white) outsiders, the traveller feels trapped within an efficiently-run British household, all her bodily needs tended to by Malay servants who scurry about her. In *How Hug a Stone*, the autobiographical self attempts to distance herself from whiteness by distancing herself from Britain and from white Britishness, aligning herself with the supposed freedom of "no man's land" in Canada instead (*Ghost Works* 143). In the predominantly white spaces she travels within in her ancestral homeland, attention to whiteness almost seems to disappear, leaving its traces only in telling metaphors or in offhand comments made by the relatives she meets. These traces of whiteness lead back to her family's colonial past in Malaysia, and memories of this past entangle with the present in ways that disrupt the traveller's idea of Canada as a new, race-free space. It is in these predominantly white spaces that the narrator's desire for white Canadian innocence most firmly takes its hold, even as she sees that this innocence cannot be maintained.

The rest of the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, "Colonial Scripts," I look at how the traveller sees herself as replaying oppressive scripts that are largely determined long before she travels through each place by previous colonial encounters. These scripts, I argue, construct a white identity for her. Although what "whiteness" means varies from one location to the next, in each of the three travel narratives, there are hints that whiteness is less oppressive when it is Canadian. In the second section, "Migrations of Place: Nations, Bodies," I look more closely at the ways in which Canadianness is associated with a better kind of whiteness in the text. In order to find what she calls a "different way of being a white woman here," the traveller attempts to work toward a different kind of embodiment by eating different foods, dressing differently, locating her body in different places or in different relations to others, or imagining a more "natural" body merging into the land around her. Significantly, these different ways of being embodied, her attempts to somehow embody the landscape around her, are all associated with being Canadian. The traveller attempts to make a clear separation between alienated whiteness and a different kind of whiteness through recourse to a romantic Canadian ideal: to be Canadian, the traveller hopes, is to be a less oppressive kind of white person who is not-British and not-American. While Canadians are represented as more innocently white, Canada itself is sometimes represented as a place of hope and promise, a place where white people need not feel guilty because they do not play a role in perpetuating a racism that happens elsewhere. In *Ghost Works*, however, whiteness is also represented as something that is learned in the body, a kind of embodied memory that has a stubborn way of perpetuating itself even as the traveller crosses national borders. In the end, "Canadian" cannot be kept separate from other national identities just as the traveller cannot recreate her own racialization *ex nihilo* in Canada.

Colonial Scripts

In their introduction to *Getting a Life*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson observe that autobiographical narrators "*take up models of identity that are culturally available*" (9; emphasis in original). Every day, they note, autobiographical storytelling occurs in a variety of locations ranging from the immigration bureau or the classified ads to hospitals and therapeutic communities (2, 10). According to Smith and Watson, each location calls for a particular kind of story to the exclusion of other narratives, with the result that the autobiographical recitation is "*prepackaged, prerecited*"(9; emphasis in original). These pre-packaged narratives do not simply tell the story of a life; rather, such narratives themselves shape the autobiographical storyteller's identity: "by adopting read-made narrative templates to structure experiential history," Smith and Watson note, autobiographical narrators "take up culturally designated subjectivities" (11). For Smith and Watson, then, culturally pre-determined scripts work to limit the identities that are available to autobiographers and everyday storytellers. According to this model, different locations call forth different autobiographical scripts, so that notions of identity (however pre-packaged) shift as the storyteller moves from one location to another. While Smith and Watson emphasize the enormous institutional power of the scripts that write us, they also stress that there are opportunities to challenge these prefabricated scripts. They note, for example, that it is possible to tell a story in the wrong location, to tell it "'too well,'" or to remain silent, all strategies which have the potential to disrupt, in different ways, the cultural scripting of identity (13).

In *Ghost Works* and in her theorizing about autobiography, Marlatt likewise analyzes the cultural scripting of identity as well as possible modes of resistance to such pre-fabricated scripts. Like Smith and Watson, in the preface to *Ghost Works* Marlatt emphasizes the importance of place in the construction of identity. Rather than imagining each location as discrete, however, Marlatt underlines the ways in which embodied memories partly construct the spaces where autobiographical narratives are told and the identities that can be found there. For the traveller in *Ghost Works*, each place she travels through is always infused with memories of other places, times, and selves, so that place cannot be thought of as independent from, or prior to, the bodies (her own and others) that have travelled through it. In "Self-Representation and Fictionalysis," Marlatt describes how the analysis of previous cultural scripts and the attempt to imagine something outside these scripts come together in the writing of autobiography. Underlining the importance of "making something [up]," Marlatt suggests that imaginative acts are crucial to the construction of identity: "as children we know that play is not only easy, it is also absorbing and immensely serious, that play is the actual practice (not factual but act-ual) of who else we might be" (203). For Marlatt, autobiography involves a kind of role playing, an imaginative engagement of the body which allows the autobiographer to construct something different from the "ready-mades" that surround her (203). Significantly, this imaginative play is not done in a vacuum. When children act out various roles through their play, they do so in the context of the adult world that they both imitate and imaginatively transform. Such play is ghostlike in that it carries memories of bodies, in this case adult bodies, that may no longer be physically present. For Marlatt, the materiality of language, the insubstantiality of ghosts, and the playful seriousness of child's play come together in autobiography or what she calls "fictionalysis." According to Marlatt, "fictionalysis" entails a double move of both fiction and analysis, a gesture toward a different future discovered partly through the analysis of an embodied and collective past: "'[i]t is exactly in the confluence of fiction (the self or selves we might be) and analysis (of the roles we have found ourselves in, defined in a complex socio-familial weave), it is in the confluence of the two that autobiography occurs, the self writing its way to life, whole life" (203-4). For Marlatt, then, autobiography involves both investigating the cultural scripts that have shaped the autobiographer and, at the same time, imagining other possible lives, scripts, or selves.

This section of my chapter examines the cultural scripting of identity in *Ghost Works*. I show how the autobiographical traveller negotiates particular colonial scripts that construct a white identity for her. In *Zócalo*, the central figure finds herself replaying the script of North American tourist, cut off from a local culture she struggles to understand. In "Month of Hungry Ghosts," the traveller takes up the script her mother played years ago in colonial Malaya, that of *memsahib*. Filling a role left vacant when her mother died, as "acting Mem" the traveller finds her social role outlined in the stories and gossip that circulate among British colonials whose identities are caught up in contrasts between inside and outside, black and white, civilized and uncivilized. Finally, in *How Hug a Stone*, the autobiographical self returns to her ancestral home in England, where the scripts of an upper-middle class British family with roots in the colonies write her as a dutiful daughter whose position in the family is fixed not only by codes of gender, but also by race: she is the white daughter of Empire who will inherit a great house. This privileged inheritance is a mixed one, however, since it depends on her staying within the walls of home and family that protect and exclude, walls that metaphorically define the borders of the British Empire. In all three narratives, the traveller tries to wrest her life from deeply ingrained but often hated ways of being and thinking. As she struggles to resist the colonialism that precedes her, she also struggles to disassociate herself from a whiteness that has become loathsome to her. Significantly, there are hints that her "Canadianness" might allow her to distance herself both from a colonial past and a racialized present. As I will show in the final section of my chapter, however, this distancing involves a kind of disavowal, a disassociation from present and previous forms of embodiment and from the complex histories she inevitably finds herself entangled in. The dream of white Canadian innocence is one that the autobiographical traveller can never completely let go of, even if this dream is both highly problematic and impossible to sustain in any unambiguous way.

Zócalo

Originally published in 1977, *Zócalo* is an autobiographical narrative told in the third person. It is about an unnamed woman's journey through Mexico with her male lover, a Japanese Canadian photographer named Yoshio. In this text, the physical journey through a land that appears unreadable to the central figure sends the woman's sense of herself and what she thinks of as her knowledge of the world into turmoil. Scripts often appear as directions the woman thinks she knows, histories she thinks she understands, or facts that dissolve in the face of a different reality that she finds perplexing. She finds that she is "keyed" one way, while the land seems to be keyed in another (60). For her, even basic directions in Mexico are confusing, since they conflict with what she has unconsciously learned about the way the world is oriented. She tries to get her head around the fact that from Progreso, the fishing town where their journey begins, "to get to the sea they take a bus north, north, which is strange to them, who come from a north that lies east & west, where to get to the sea they go west, or east, but here they go north" (8). Canada, the land that lies east and west, is clearly imagined as a place far from the one she finds herself travelling through, and she struggles to bridge the distance between these two places.[3] She scans the unfamiliar landscape for signs she can read and watches the local people with rapt attention, hoping to catch glimpses of a way of life that seems both hidden and strange to her. In this text, the autobiographer's whiteness, her sense of herself as racialized, is intimately connected with her identity both as a tourist and as a writer/autobiographer. Unlike her Japanese Canadian lover, she finds she cannot converse easily with those around her, and there are hints that it is her whiteness that keeps her from bridging the gap between herself and the local people she desperately wishes to get to know. At the same time, her role as a writer means that she is doubly invading the space of the people she meets, wanting to capture their lives in her text.

The woman's desire for distance from a tourist's identity can be measured partly by her disdain for many of the tourists around her, including the fundamentalist American tourists she observes on a bus tour in Mexico. Although the tourists are there to observe, they are unable to see anything, finally, but a reflection of themselves (52-53). Their self-righteous conversation shapes the Mexican landscape into a narrative that confirms their own imperialist and Christian world view: "History teaches us the ways of the Lord, he was saying, these Mayans now, great builders but –" (52). The woman finds the reference to history particularly ironic ("History? she mutters to Yo"), since the bus is clearly cut off from the land and the people it purports to be exploring: "this is a tourist bus," she notes, "this is a sealed capsule on its way to a past it cannot understand" (52). Although the woman wishes to disassociate herself from the self-absorbed, colonizing view of the American tourists, she cannot completely do so: "We'll never escape ourselves, she thinks," including herself in her critique, while a few pages earlier, she worries that her own eyes are "'irrevocably christian' after all" (53, 47).[4]

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[3] That Canada is envisioned as a land of two, rather than three, coasts here is symptomatic of the narrator's desire to see Canada as a *tabula rasa* where previous colonial identities can be erased and racial identities can be constructed anew. The erasure of aboriginal lands involved in this vision reflects the time the text was written. It is a vision formed prior to negotiations over the northern stretch of land now called Nunavit and prior to the inclusion of these lands in at least some popular discourses of what constitutes the Canadian nation. As I will show in the next chapter, the historical and ongoing violence involved in such erasures of aboriginal presence is a subject Maria Campbell powerfully explores in *Halfbreed*.

The woman feels her distance from the land and the people around her acutely at *Isla Mujeres* when she and her lover rent a top-story room that hangs out over the street (25). Ironically, just when she has the greatest vantage point from which to see the colours that flash below her, she feels she is missing out on important connections with the life that, as writer and autobiographer, she wants to capture on the page. She comments on their distance from "all that unknown life going on": "feel like a tourist eh? he laughs. she resists even the label, i hate being a tourist" (32). Her lover seems to embrace this identity, however ironically: "that's our role," he says (33). At times, Yo sees the central figure as rather innocently gullible (17), as someone who impossibly romanticizes what she sees before her: "i'm not as romantic as you, nor as young, he underlines it" (34). For Yo, the whole place is "a setup" for tourists, and even the people who live on the island are part of the attraction: "that's how they hook people like us, a glimpse of native life for us to gawk at, & don't we gawk! the ultimate tourists" (33). Often found behind the lens of his camera, Yo snaps pictures, sets up scenes, and looks for photographic opportunities. He decides to go on a trip to the ruins, for example, because unexpected clouds make the lighting right for picture taking (51; cf. 28). He is interested mostly in "what he will *make* of it": "Man, she thinks, men with their distancing eye" (44). As the woman sees it, the shutters of their top-story room and of the camera set up barriers that artificially block out the movement of the sun and freeze the motion of the bustling life below (26). But these barriers do not seem to bother him – or more accurately, perhaps for Yo these barriers simply do not exist: "in the eye of a camera nothing is foreign you know," he tells her at one point. "Yes, she thinks, but doesn't say, I want it to be that way for me too, but it isn't" (24).

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[4] That the land she is travelling through may be a deeply Christian one, or that the American tourists might connect in some way through their religion with some of the people in Mexico, is not a possibility that the traveller entertains here. I am indebted to Jo-Ann Wallace for this observation.

The differences between the two lovers derive in part from differences in artistic medium: he is a photographer, interested in how light plays against the surface of scenes, while she is a writer, wanting to see into the hearts of the people she meets (10, 51). While the unnamed woman partly attributes the ease with which Yo takes up his artistic challenges to differences in gender – it is his "distancing eye" that allows him to move with ease among the people and scenes he photographs (44) – her comments elsewhere suggest a more complicated story. The gulf between her general uneasiness and his untroubled way of feeling at home wherever they travel is sometimes attributed to differences in race. She describes herself and her lover at one point as "migratory birds, strange plummage from somewhere up north, though they don't know that, always they are glancing at him, wondering chino? ¿japonés?" (24). Local people always want to talk to Yo rather than to the unnamed woman, although she is the one who is most anxious to make connections with the Mexicans she meets (12). There are hints that his Asian features allow him to converse easily with the people who approach him ("the usual questions, ¿japonés? ¿japonés?"), despite the fact that he never bothered to learn even a little Spanish – unlike the woman, who is always flipping through her Spanish dictionary, trying to make out the words they are saying, wanting desperately to understand instead of just being happy, as he is, to sit down and smoke cigarettes together (12). For the woman, Yo's brown skin and the relative ease with which he fits in with local people serve to highlight her own foreignness (and by implication her whiteness), a different racialization that she sees as alienating her from the people around her.

When they are lying in bed together at one point, it is racial difference that seems to place a gulf between the two: "your eyes are black & i can't see what they say," she tells him (21).

The description of Yo's "black" eyes is meant to suggest how people close to one another, even lovers, can be strangers to one another at times. As Douglas Barbour puts it in his excellent analysis of *Zócalo*, "[a]mong other things, this is a book about essential differences, even between people who are close" (*Daphne* 45-46). However, the trope of black eyes as unknowable – along with the idea of "essential differences" itself – depends on larger modes of racialization (the black other as unknown and unknowable) that predate the encounter between lovers here and that pervade the text in various ways. The gulf between "white" and "black" is metaphorically laid out in the opening dream sequence, where the traveller's "own white face" is set against the non-white faces of those who stare back at her (5). Throughout this dream, the narrator is fascinated with a white truck with which she is in some mysterious way identified. The truck stands out as different from "a number of tail-dragging black sedans" that also pass by. The black sedans are crowded and noisy: "she can almost hear shouts, dogs barking, can almost see the sedans full of people, kids" (4). This contrast between white and black is emphasized elsewhere in the text as well. The organization of *Zócalo* itself registers an underlying preoccupation with light and darkness, with sections on daytime activities alternating with sections entitled "Night." In the night sections, the unnamed woman is haunted by the presence of a shoeshine man. While his race is unspecified, his poverty, along with his association with night and death in the unnamed woman's imagination, suggest he incarnates much of what is mysterious and alien in Mexico for her, something distant from her own experience as a privileged white tourist in the text. Although she longs to understand something about him, the huge physical gulf between them – he sleeps on a bench, wears tattered clothes, and lives, presumably, outdoors – makes it almost impossible for her to imagine what his day might be like. This stark contrast between her own privilege as a tourist and his lack of privilege is something the unnamed woman wants to understand as she struggles to write the local people into her autobiographical text.

While Yo chats comfortably with Mexicans who are curious about his origins, the unnamed woman is always uneasy about her place here (12, 24). At the same time, she resists even the label "tourist," and even as she sees herself playing out the role, she tries to find some other way to *be* here. She worries particularly about how local people see her: is she invading their space, or are they simply indifferent to her presence here (14, 24)? She tries to imagine how she must look in their eyes. After renting a Honda motorcycle to cross Isla Mujeres for a trip to the beach with her lover, for example, she looks back and sees the boys who rent out the machine "gazing after them, this crazy couple, the skinny white woman & the middleaged Oriental – hunched fiercely over his machine" (27). Her depiction of herself and her lover as a "crazy couple" in a phrase that explicitly highlights racial difference is interesting. The couple's "craziness" presumably involves both their physical differences from each other – she is skinny while he is middle aged, she is white and he is brown – as well as their collective distance from the local people who rent them the bike. In this ultimately self-reflexive gaze, the narrator and her lover may be seen as "crazy" because they are like other tourists, a strange group of people that local inhabitants have to cater to in order to make a living. At the same time, by imagining herself as crazy in the eyes of these young merchants, the central figure may also be envisioning a local perception of herself and her companion as distinct from other tourists, as tourists with a difference – a representation of herself that other parts of the text call into question.

If the American tourists are physically and psychically sealed off from the world around them, the unnamed woman often finds herself in an uncomfortably similar position in the text. On a guided tour, for example, she hears that in one ancient game, the captain of the winning team was killed, and she wonders at her own uncomprehending reaction: "is she any the less 'Northamerican' than these others who likewise cannot conceive of a man fighting to *lose* his life" (57). While she tries to interpret this desire to sacrifice one's life in feminist terms, she realizes that this interpretation likely misinterprets the complex histories she is trying to understand: "another part of her murmurs, wait, wait, this is something you can't translate, not even the words are right" (57). In this text, American tourists are particularly cut off from the places they move through partly because of a problem of translation: the translation of a way of being and thinking, a whole culture, is particularly problematic in the context of grossly unequal colonial relations. This point is emphasized, once again, when a "Norteamericano" at the ruins at Uxmal climbs on a roof he is not supposed to climb on, despite the sign prohibiting it: "I don't read signs that aren't in English," he says simply. "Heady with his own elevation," he cannot, or will not, read the signs around him – and yet the narrator also understands his position when she reaches the top and "stands aloft over a world" (42). On the bus, at the ruins, and on the guided tour, the traveller identifies herself, if rather uneasily, as North American, a (white) tourist among other (white) tourists. At the same time, she struggles to find a way to see herself as different from the tourists around her, whose apparent inability to understand anything about the culture they are travelling through she clearly disdains.

While her more critically self-reflexive views as a writer make her different, in her view, from the fundamentalist American tourists she sees, ironically, it is her writerly obsessions as she travels from one artistically tantalizing scene to another that turn her presence into a particularly colonizing one. As a writer, the unnamed woman finds herself "caught up in the real & fictional people, caught in the possible stories of their lives" (16). Her interest in the lives of those around her sometimes threatens to take over, interfering with her ability to be involved in whatever it is she is doing at the moment (cf. 29, 31). Even more important, this intense curiosity is described in terms that suggest invasion: she wants to be "out with the moon that keeps wandering over town, looking in everyone's back room" – a troubling image that suggests she would peer into their lives if only she could do so invisibly, with impunity (21; cf. 32). However, this illusion of invisibility cannot be maintained. At one point, she borrows Yo's camera to take a few pictures, but she cannot imagine herself as an unobtrusive observer, nor can she replicate his dispassionate gaze. Instead, she wants desperately to become part of the scene. She looks at a man on the seawall, wanting "not to see but to be – him? – impossible," she realizes (10). Yet she tries to imagine it. Her efforts to view the world through the camera only make her see herself: "you're snooping, that's what you like about that lens, isn't it," one man tells her as he watches her trying to imagine herself as the man on the seawall; "it's like looking into people's windows at night, you're spying" (10; cf. 11). In many ways, she realizes that he is right: as a photographer, and particularly as a tourist-autobiographer, she is snooping, and her intense curiosity sometimes replicates the colonial gaze she hates. Just when she most wants to become part of the scene, she is cut off from it; just when she wants to observe everything, she is most alienated from the people around her and most identified with whiteness, like the moon that she sees as "a white track" in the sky, "white white in the dark" (21, 20).

For the autobiographical traveller, tourists are a colonizing presence in Mexico. Like the Americans on the bus tour, what tourists do is to impose their own language on what they think they see but cannot really understand. What the autobiographical traveller tries to do, instead, is to recognize what she sees as Mexico's fundamental difference: Mexico is mysterious and alien, and it cannot be captured on the page of her life text, despite her desire to do so. Thus far, I have only alluded to the Canadian aspect of racial difference in this story: both the autobiographical "she" and her lover are "strange plummage from up north" (24), but only she is recognized by the local people as such, partly, it is suggested, because the "multicultural" nature of Canada is not something that is known about in this other place. Significantly, as I will examine more closely later in the chapter, while most of the tourists are seen with a critical eye in *Zócalo*, two girls from Calgary are exempt from this critical gaze. As I will argue in the section of the chapter entitled

"Migrations of Place," the text suggests that the autobiographical traveller's ability to discern Mexico's difference is something she can do because she is Canadian – like the girls from Calgary who travel without a guidebook, investigating the ruins by following their own intuition instead of blindly following what supposed authorities have written about the place they find themselves in. It is this supposed greater sensitivity to difference, I will argue, that paradoxically allows the autobiographical traveller to reach out to the Mexican hammock seller in the final pages of this travel narrative, dissolving the difference that her Canadian eye has allowed her to discern. Thus being Canadian is sometimes represented as doubly advantageous, since it seems to allow the central figure both to discern and then to eradicate the differences that trouble her. In this earliest travel text, then, cultural difference is particularly surmountable, able to be bridged through a kind of youthful Canadian idealism that Marlatt is more skeptical about in later writings such as *Telling It*.

"Month of Hungry Ghosts"

In "Month of Hungry Ghosts," the central autobiographical figure travels back to her childhood home in Penang, where she finds the colonial world she used to inhabit still intact. The journey takes place in 1976, a year after the death of Marlatt's mother. In the preface to *Ghost Works*, Marlatt notes that she and her sister Pam "accompanied our father in our mother's stead on a trip that had been planned as their last one back to Penang, where they began their married life and where we had lived as children" (vii). Significantly, in this return to her childhood home, the central autobiographical figure finds that she is travelling in her mother's place in more ways than one. If the old British system is still intact in Malaysia (91-92), the identity of *memsahib* that her mother left vacant when she died is also still there, waiting for the autobiographical traveller to take it up, however temporarily. At one point, for example, the traveller notices Eng Kim, the servant who used to care for her when she was a child, discretely trying to discern whether they have finished with the soup. The traveller regrets her mother's absence and wonders how to take her place: "should she signal, as acting Mem is there some sign she should give, as their absent hostess, as her absent mother would have done" (121). For the autobiographical traveller, the trip is filled with ghosts from a childhood past, with old colonial identities, strict cultural taboos, and hierarchical codes of speech and behaviour. As in *Zócalo*, the central figure often finds herself replaying colonial scripts. In this case, however, the scripts are ones she thought she left behind years ago: "Here is a world dreaming me as much as i am dreaming it," she notes, "a dream that's been going on too long, i want to wake up" (105). In a collage of short-line poems, journal entries, bits of narrative prose, and letters home, the autobiographical narrator searches for another "way to be a white woman here" (93), a task she finds both difficult and exceedingly frustrating. While she loathes the inequities she sees so clearly around her and longs to break down the lines of class and race that separate her from Eng Kim and from other non-British inhabitants of the place, she finds her role already scripted for her by the tacit rules of propriety, by the physical walls that surround her, and by the apparently binding expectations of others, as well as by her own fears of what may happen if she steps out of bounds.

In his classic 1937 monograph *Malaysia*, Rupert Emerson describes the life of British colonists in the Straights Settlements of Malaya in terms that resonate with Marlatt's representation of her childhood home. According to Emerson, "the British in the Straits are themselves aliens who for the most part take little continuing interest in the ultimate destinies of the Settlements. The major part of their time is devoted to their own private concerns, they remain Britons whose essential roots are still in the home soil, and they see little reason to doubt the capacities of the British officials . . . to rule the Colony with which they themselves are so fragmentarily identified"

(281-82).[5] Although Marlatt's trip to Penang took place nearly twenty years after Malaya's official independence from British colonial rule in 1957 and thirteen years after the nation-state of Malaysia came into being in 1963 (Ooi xxix-xxx), formal independence did not unravel the colonial relations that began at least as far back as the acquisition, under false pretenses, of Penang by the English East India Company in 1786 (Kaur 184; cf. Shennan 4; Woodcock xxiii). In *The British in the Far East*, George Woodcock underlines that because British colonists remained a minority in Penang, they were "sustained . . . by a sense of their own superiority which they contrived to communicate to their subject peoples, and by an attitude towards native races . . . that combined in varying degrees contempt and affection" (xvii). Woodcock suggests that this attitude prevailed at least until the 1941 Japanese invasion of Malaya, which disrupted, Kaur notes, "the myth of white superiority" in the region (Woodcock xvii; Kaur 10). However, in *Ghost Works* Marlatt maintains that this attitude prevailed much longer, at least among the family friends she visits with her sister and father in the former British colony.

"It's strange being a princess again," the narrator of "Hungry Ghosts" writes to a lover she has left behind in what seems like another world (97). Trapped in a house where "everything is kept spacious, uncluttered, unlittered, & clean by servants who pick up after you, wash your clothes, cook your food, do your dishes, ad nauseum" (97), she longs to get outside to see some of the life beyond the walls of the luxurious house in which she grew up. The iron schedule of the house itself becomes "a prison" (98): breakfast must be at a particular time, the toast and coffee must be done just so, the doors must be locked and bolted, and everyone goes to bed at ten thirty (82, 98, 124). As the women of the house, the central figure and her sister are expected to give orders and make sure the system functions smoothly (98). Their host, Mr. Y, lives a petty and regimented existence – gossiping about business associates(77), afraid to touch the earth for fear of hookworm or other diseases, eating canned European foods, knowing "almost nothing about what surrounds him, what the trees or birds are, what the fruits are" despite the fact that he has lived in Penang for years (99-100).[6] Although the central figure strives to get beyond the locked and bolted doors, the regimented and exploitative life, she finds it is not easy. Her life here is not entirely in her own hands: the car she borrows is a company car, and she cannot take it out any time she pleases (99); when she goes out for a walk, she is told to hang onto her purse, and her own fears of young men who call after her make her uneasy (82). As she writes to her lover, the expectations of a network of people ranging from the servants to her father's friends "shape the parameters of my behaviour," so that in this place "i only act out a parody of myself" (106). Even her silences mark her participation in a colonial system she abhors: when her host repeats stereotypes about local people, for example, she simply smiles at him, and her smile suggests her silent agreement (120).

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[5] Emerson includes Singapore, Penang, and Malacca in his chapter on the Straights Settlements (269).

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[6] According to Woodcock, life in "British Far Eastern Society" was marked by monotony and a rigidity of schedules from at least the late-nineteenth century onward: "a rigidity and a formalism developed even tighter than those that bound contemporary England" (163). Planters, civil servants, "[e]ven rajas, if they were British, had their routines," in a society where class and race distinctions became even more sharply defined than in the "temporarily lost homeland" (164, 163). Writing in 1969, Woodcock partly envisions what he calls the "Far East" in Orientalist terms that emphasize the homogeneous, static nature of the societies he examines. At the same time, some of the structures he mentions – the great numbers of servants in the "typical household" (174), the rigidity of schedules (164), the importance of clubs (188) and sports (190), the emphasis on sending children home to England for their education (175) – find echoes in Marlatt's *Ghost Works*. In a rather different representation of British life in Malaya, one that openly celebrates the lives of British colonials, Margaret Shennan writes: "the orthodox perception of British Malaya remains: of a smug, superficial, patronizing community, which deserved no better than it received. On the other hand, survivors from the colonial era remain convinced that it was a good and well-ordered world. . . . [I]n the last analysis the British in Malaya were arguably no more philistine, class-ridden, pleasure-seeking, exploitative or condescending than their families, friends and peers back home" (9).

While physical boundaries help maintain separations between colonizer and colonized in this text – the servants' quarters are clearly separated from her childhood home, and the unmapped streets outside, in Mr. Y's imagination, are peopled with "terrorists" and other strangers (123) – these divisions are also maintained discursively, through the incessant gossip and chatter of the British colonizers who draw up a world in their small talk.[7] In a long narrative section entitled "the line," the narrator thinks back to her childhood, trying to recall "the line that was drawn to protect them from the strange" (120). This line reappears in the chatter around the dinner table, in all the stories about the people who work for "the company" – business being their host's major interest in life. Their host is scandalized, for example, at the thought that a monk has become one of the directors of the company: "it's disgraceful really," he exclaims (121). In Mr. Y's conversation, one story melds into another without pause, piling stereotype upon stereotype, with no room left in all the polite talk for disagreement. Gossiping about another man who works for the company, Mr. Y notes that

> he has three wives you know, & i suppose the going gets a bit tough at home poor thing, with a smile at her, implying, you wouldn't want to be one of three would you, i mean, is it conceivable? Three! her father exclaims, are they still doing that? Well it's cruel really, he's living far beyond his means . . . . (119).

In a few sentences, the line between "us" and "them" is clearly drawn: the man who has three wives stands in for a group of people who are clearly backward because they are neither Christian nor monogamous; such people should not aspire to too much materially, but rather should know how to stay in their place.[8] As Vron Ware observes, one idea that runs through various colonial discourses is that "the position of women in a society indicates the level of civilization it has achieved" (14). This common idea borrows the rhetoric of feminism to criticize non-European cultures and thus bolster colonial relationships - precisely what Mr. Y does in his dinner table talk. Moreover, his smile at the narrator is meant to involve her in his condemnation of the man with three wives; such people, he suggests, do not belong in his polite and civilized world.

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[7] For an interesting analysis of the figure of "the stranger," see Ahmed. In *Strange Encounters*, Ahmed notes that a stranger is not simply someone we do not know; instead, "stranger" discourse imagines the stranger as someone who is other or who in some way does not belong. "Through strange encounters, the figure of the 'stranger' is produced," Ahmed writes, "not as that which we fail to recognize, but as that which we have already recognized as 'a stranger'" (3).

That this polite colonial world is a pervasively white one is emphasized in a number of ways, through descriptions of the food they eat, the plants that surround them, and the stories they tell. The silver basket of toast that forms an important part of the meal, for example, contains toast that is "so white, so thin light shines thru, as it shines onto his skin, a palour of small wrists extended out of the cuffs" (119). Their host's whiteness is partly a measure of his alienation from the land around him, for he obviously does not spend much time in the sun: "his body's palour" is rather strange given the "years spent in the tropics" (119). That both host and guest, teller and listener are implicated in this whiteness is suggested by the way the plants lean in to listen from the porch that, like the basket of toast, is also tellingly "white" (119). Both guests and plants listen in on secret stories that circulate in order to establish and reaffirm a white identity. Such stories work to maintain racial divisions that are seen as both obvious and natural, and yet at the same time in need of constant reinforcement, as emphasized in a stanza from her poem "street opera." The lines form a meta-story about race, for they quote the story of the telling of a story about the translation of a Shakespearean narrative across what should be clearly defined racial and generic borders: "'the funniest story he told / was of going to see *Hamlet* / done as a Chinese opera'" (101). The story is funny because the white high culture that Shakespeare represents here is assumed to be untranslatable; for the teller of this story, the absurd crossing of racial boundaries only reinforces the idea that such boundaries are, in the end, ultimately not crossable.

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[8] Mr. Y's discourse echoes an older argument for continuing colonial intervention in Malaya. As Emerson put it in 1937, colonial control "finds a moral justification, as Lord Milner once pointed out, only in the belief that the British 'are better judges, for the time being, of the interests of the native population than they are themselves'" (290). (According to Emerson (290), Milner's statement was made in the House of Lords, May 12, 1920.)

While the American tourists in Mexico see only themselves rather than the land they are travelling through, in Malaysia the colonial British settlers see divisions of race only too clearly. Unlike the autobiographical traveller, the white settlers do not want to cross what they see, or work hard to see, as a huge racial divide; instead, they do everything in their power to reinforce what sometimes seems like a frighteningly permeable racial boundary. Mr Y's dinner table reflects a careful retention of British culture and a distancing from the local culture that the autobiographical traveller deplores. As she looks down at the plate of food she is served at dinnertime, the traveller finds this stilted retention of culture both tedious and deadening: "Nothing has changed, there lie the same roast potatoes, the same pork chop, same carrots & okra her mother would have served, the chop cut up in pieces for them by amah in the kitchen, carefully cut up & soaked in gravy – a world contained on her plate" (123).[9] It is a world that the narrator desperately wants to leave behind.

In Mexico, the central figure worries that her curiosity as tourist-autobiographer might "consume the world" (31), so that the only reality she can see is one that she has already imagined. In Malaysia, however, she worries that her own reality will be obliterated by the world she has entered here, a world, as she writes to her lover, "so voraciously real it eats up all the other real where you & Kit & Jan are, so that even its strangeness has disappeared" (104). "My impatience, my curiosity as a visitor can't consume this world," she notes, "because, in a curious way, i'm part of it & must act out my role to reach its end" (105). The memories that flood through her as she moves through places she knew as a child, along with her continuing connections with the people around her, complicate her position here. She wonders whether beginnings necessarily determine the rest of the story, whether the unconscious habits she learned around the dinner table when she was small continue to determine her despite her own resistance to the colonial hierarchies she sees around her (118). She finds echoes of her earlier life everywhere she goes. A stranger stops her at the Chartered Bank Chambers, for example, to tell her that he used to drive her to school (107). When she walks down the road (78), watches the waves crash on the shore (83), or drives to the beach (105), the experience is overlaid with vague memories from her childhood, making it difficult for her to separate herself from what she sees as an unreal world. So although she is fascinated, as she is in Mexico, by the "stories, the characters," and also in this case by the "sense of melodrama [that] pervades everyone's life" here (107), she cannot as easily extricate herself from this scene.

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[9] Woodcock notes that in Malaya in the mid-nineteenth century, numerous Europeans "became used to a kind of sub-cuisine whose menus were scanty and monotonous and whose products were, at best, parodies of English meals. A weak, rancid soup would be followed by bony fish, and the main course would be tough local chicken, the meal ending with caramel cream" (180).

In this section, I have analyzed how whiteness is constructed both materially and discursively through the careful policing of racial boundaries in Marlatt's Malaysia. In "Hungry Ghosts," the idea that the autobiographical traveller might be tainted by the racist ways of colonial British settlers in Malaysia is especially unsettling to her because this colonial scene is so obviously a part of her, a tangible part of her past that she worries may have carried on into her present. It is in this place, after all, that she encounters the colonial "ghosts" and worries that she might turn into a ghost herself. Unlike the final narrative included in *Ghost Works*, in this return to her childhood home racial anxieties are very much at the surface of the text. So it is perhaps not surprising that in "Hungry Ghosts," the traveller underlines most explicitly the promise of difference that Canada holds: noting that as a child she "equated what was English with a colonialist attitude," she suggests that her return to Malaysia has made her realize "what a big move it was for them [her parents], to come to Canada" (92). Later in the chapter, I will show how the central autobiographical figure works to dissolve the boundaries of race that are so carefully upheld by the British colonists in Malaysia. She does so through particular bodily actions such as walking barefoot or eating durian fruit, transgressions that she sees herself as being able to enact in part, I argue, because she is Canadian, because of the move her parents made to Canada so many years ago. If she believes that Canadianness allows her to separate herself from the white British colonists, however, she finds that this separation can never be entirely complete. Whiteness continues to haunt her, as it does throughout *Ghost Works*.

How Hug a Stone

The third travel story, *How Hug a Stone*, is about a trip to England that the central autobiographical figure takes with Kit, her twelve-year-old son. Wanting to show her son the place her parents referred to as "home" although neither had lived there since the Thirties, the central figure takes him to visit his great-grandmother and other relatives he has never seen (vii). The story begins with the flight to England. The narrator's romantic description of "flying along a sunset's brilliant flush" is quickly interrupted by her son's return to the seat beside her: "'i LOVE to go into that lab'ratory,'" he says. "'what?' 'the one that has a big hunk of shit that won't go down'" (131). Their journey barely begun, the narrator already has to rewrite the scene: "thus revised, flying along a sunset with our shit, leftovers, earthladen sacs, thanks to 23,000 gallons of fossil fuel sustained aloft for a few hours improbably in a DC 10" (131). The scene's emphasis on the complex layering of the present with the past – how an assortment of objects provide traces of the past and, at the same time, converge in unexpected ways to form the present moment – prefigures later travels through the countryside and encounters with extended family in England. Traces of past events, like the fossil fuels that sustain the aircraft, shape the present in sometimes invisible ways; and throughout, much extra baggage, "shit, leftovers," are carried along. Throughout *How Hug*, the traveller looks for traces of what she may have inherited from her mother in the stories told by relatives and in the English countryside around her. When her cousin tells her that the red dirt of Devon is "sandstone parent material," for example, the traveller connects the bedrock she is standing on with the bedrock of family she feels has shaped her identity: "what is parent material? how long do we need it?" she wonders (141). Whether needed or not, parent material persists, like the smell of the dirt of Devon fields mixed into the newly shorn fleece her cousin is spinning. The fleece carries traces of the land it comes from, she notes, "sheep turd & grass smell," a pungent odour that "lingers on the hands all day" (141). Belonging in family – having some notion of a family home, familial ground, and extended family to return to, however displaced from England or from her family's English ways the traveller feels herself to be – is a mixed inheritance in *How Hug*. It is absolutely necessary, for it provides the ground to stand on; at the same time, as her cousin warns her about the fleece, "it's the real thing, smelly, she says" (141).

One familial script that returns to haunt the central autobiographical figure in *How Hug* is that of the dutiful daughter, a role that she sees her mother having played, however resentfully. In England, what the autobiographical traveller calls her "mother's trace" (141) is partly found in the stories told by Kit's great-grandmother. While these stories have the power to take the traveller back to a past she dearly wishes to retrieve, constructing a sense of family connections and thus a sense of self for her, the stories come with a lot of family baggage attached. The old woman lovingly describes her daughter's first public function so many years ago, an important wedding of a magistrate and a planter's daughter held on the grounds of the Residency in Malacca

- a colonial wedding *par excellence*, in other words, held on official grounds, attended, the grandmother hints, only by the colonial elite (143). Everyone thought the eighteen-year-old Edrys was the prettiest of all: "she looked a *dream*," the old woman enthuses, recalling a memory that for her has become crystallized, unchanging, perfect. But as the autobiographical narrator realizes, it was not her mother's dream; it was only one that she inherited (143). Bored with a futile life of dancing and rounds of tennis, Edrys longed to move back to England in order to become a dress designer and dressmaker. She quickly abandoned her own dreams, however, and did what was expected of her, getting married and remaining in Penang instead. "Isn't it extraordinary?" the old woman asks. Despite the grandmother's exclamation, the story seems rather predictable, the script of a woman's abandoned dreams recited once again (144). In this case, however, two quite specific and specifically *located* dreams are pitted against one another: the grandmother's colonial dream of grand weddings and leisure pursuits that shape the lives of privileged white women in Malaya, and the mother's relatively egalitarian dream of earning a more modest living for herself back home in England. The juxtaposition of place is important here: while the English countryside the narrator travels through is the most immediate ground explored here, the stories of family also cross the globe, with allusions to events in Malaysia, India, and Australia sprinkled throughout the text. Family stories told in the English countryside, then, are overlaid with meanings drawn from these other places; and what it means to be a dutiful daughter depends on these larger contexts, including, as the grandmother's dream suggests, the family's participation in dreams of colonial domination.

The family line, with its pre-scripted positions to be taken up by family members as they appear on the scene, can be both harsh and repressive, as shown in the section entitled "grounded in the family" (133). The narrator's step-brother, who knows how to categorize "every flower in all four directions contained by a brick wall," is also an expert in family places and categories. Luring the bodies of moths with a light,

> he wants to fix them in their families, he wants them wing-pulled-open, pinned on a piece of cotton, mortified. as then, i protest this play as death – despite his barrage of scientific names, his calling to my son, you game? as if he held the script everyone wants to be in, except the moths. (133).

If the grandmother's dream compels the narrator's mother to participate in the family story, the step-brother likewise works to involve the next generation in the game of family fixing. In this game, the moths, like family members, are lured in and then fixed in their positions. While the description of the step-brother's moth game is particularly critical of scripts that fix family members in their place, the scene also involves a less obvious critique of the larger colonial structures that shape these family scripts. The moth scene echoes with another moth story narrated just a few pages earlier, at the end of "Hungry Ghosts." Arriving home late one night, the central autobiographical figure and her sister are captivated by the sight of a moth laying her eggs on a candle. For the two sisters, the moth is both a reminder of their dead mother and also, significantly, a part of the natural world from which the English colonialists in Malaysia continually work to distance themselves (123-25). At dinner earlier that evening, the huge moth is an annoyance that Mr. Y tries to ignore, a rude interruption to his rigidly organized dinner: "we have these creatures here, smiles, with a wave of his hand at their plates, please do carry on" (123). When it flits around the dinner table, interrupting Mr. Y's endless narrative of colonial hierarchies, the sisters find it a welcome distraction, a relief from the polite colonialism they find themselves reluctantly participating in as they take their places at the table. The sight of the moth later that evening makes them pledge to light a candle for their mother, following local traditions they are not sure they have a right to follow, connecting their mother for a moment with a world they see as outside the colonial scripts that structure their lives in Penang (125).

The juxtaposition of moth scenes in the two travel narratives underlines the way colonial relations continue to determine the structures of family in *Ghost Works* – even in Marlatt's England, where the impact of colonialism is less immediately apparent than in Mexico or Malaya. While Mr. Y in "Hungry Ghosts" does not know the names of the birds or trees that surround him, the narrator's step-brother in *How Hug* persistently categorizes the natural world around him, correcting the narrator, for example, when she mistakes the smell of lime for linden: "linden? i ask, lime he says, genus *Tilia*" (136). Despite his vast scientific knowledge, like Mr. Y, the narrator's step-brother is alienated from the natural world around him, as the ease with which he kills the moths suggests. Elsewhere in the text, such alienation from the natural world is equated with "a colonialist attitude, that defensive set against what immediately surrounds as real on its own terms" (92). The step-brother's reliance on scientific categorization to order his world underlines the link with "a colonialist attitude" here. According to postcolonial theorist Mary Louise Pratt, the system of classifying nature that emerged in eighteenth-century Europe interrupted local knowledges, renaming the world as seen through the eyes of the bourgeois European subject: "One by one the planet's life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order" (31). Like Mr. Y, the step-brother works to control the chaos of nature, underlining his own authority as observer in the process: "it's a nuisance really, it's not what you think," he tells the autobiographical traveller, informing her that the fragrance of linden she remembers comes not from a flower but rather from a sticky secretion that insects leave (136). While familial categories are the primary focus of critique in the moth passage and elsewhere in *How Hug*, when this text is read in the context of *Zócalo* and "Hungry Ghosts" – travel narratives in which issues of race and colonial domination are more clearly underlined – passages such as the step-brother's moth game take on colonial resonances as well.

It should not be surprising that colonial resonances run through a text that is ostensibly about the English countryside, for the family the traveller returns to in Britain has its roots in three separate British colonies: the grandmother was born in India in the 1890s and gave birth to her daughter in Bombay, moved with her daughter to Malaya and then, when war broke out, to Australia, where the central autobiographical figure was born (144). Traces of this colonial past run through the family's stories. When the traveller wonders about her grandmother's accent ("is it Welsh?"), for example, her uncle explains: "*my dear, she speaks like all colonials deprived of an English education. it's what we call Anglo-Indian*" (143, emphasis in original). While, as Marlatt makes clear in "Hungry Ghosts," it is in the colonies that white Englishness most needs to be confirmed, the more muted anxiety about race in *How Hug* shows that the threat of a less-than-perfectly-English Englishness continues even when the family resettles in England. The grandmother's voice points to her schooling "in the hills" in India (144), a colonial past that has the possibility of undermining her (white) Englishness. In order to reaffirm this Englishness, she sends her own daughter to boarding school in England – a seven-year separation that clearly shapes the daughter's sense of self, what her friend Jean calls her "'anti-' nature" (175). In *How Hug*, the colonial relations that have shaped the central autobiographical figure's family elsewhere continue to mark their lives in, and the traveller's journey through, England. The traveller's son carries on the family tradition of colonial dominance in his play and in his dreams, underlining the colonial thread that runs through the text. His dream of himself as king in a huge mansion, his camped-up version of British butler tones, and his game of being in the jungle, "always on the Safari, always having to fight Wild Animals" all parody, in different ways, the colonial relations that ground the traveller's English family (169-70, 143, 150). The traveller's grandmother nostalgically recalls her own youth, one in which servants catered to every need, and she regrets the decline of "a great house": "'I never washed a cup and saucer til I was twenty. Never washed a handkerchief, never washed a pair of stockings. We weren't burdened at all with the worries that young people have today'" (144).

The title, *How Hug a Stone*, refers partly to the traveller's desire to connect with her mother and find peace at the anniversary of her death by turning to the mysterious stones at Avebury, stones she wants to see as embodying an ancient and enduring sense of motherhood: "how hug a stone (mother) except nose in to lithic fold, the old slow pulse beyond word become, under flesh, mutter of stone, *stane*, *stei*-ing power" (184). However, this notion of a motherhood that crosses the centuries is immediately undercut by the passage that follows. When the narrator returns to Reading, she is once again confronted with "the white stone lady reclined on her stone couch at the foot of the garden at the end of the Empire, in an attitude of elegant attentiveness" (185). While the stones at Avebury give her a way to imagine herself in a long line of mothers as she struggles to mother her own son, it is the white stone lady that stands for the part of her mother she needs most to come to terms with, a mother whose life was so much shaped by the declining stages of a flourishing British Empire. While she can imagine that her mother is in some way connected with a mythic idea of motherhood, then, she inevitably returns to a mother located at the end of the Empire, whose elegance is clearly connected with a colonial dream. Listening to stories about her mother told by friends and relatives in England, the traveller begins to see how her mother's struggle has shaped her own life, a life torn between the script of dutiful daughter, "easily guilted," and rebel, "refusing the dream its continuity" (175, 143). The dutiful daughter, a script the central figure reluctantly plays out just like her mother before her, does not have her role defined solely within the confines of a patriarchal family; rather, she is also, at the same time, a daughter of Empire.

In *How Hug*, anxieties about a colonial past continue to haunt the traveller. While references to her family's colonial past, along with references to race, are more muted in this final travel narrative, a larger colonial world continually encroaches upon the family's memories as well as upon the family's continuing activities. An "Anglo-Indian" cadence haunts the grandmother's voice, potentially disrupting its Englishness; the grandmother's dreams of Empire in Malaya overshadow her daughter's more modest dreams of becoming a dressmaker in England; and the traveller's son parodies the colonial relations that have shaped his family. At the same time, colonial relations continue into the present, so that the quiet English countryside is neither quiet nor "English," in the conservative sense of white Englishness. Jean, the ex-governor's wife and school friend of the traveller's mother, worries about social tensions at home, or what she calls "these days of career marchers & young punks tearing up the streets" (178).[10] Allusions to racial tensions both in England and across the globe disrupt the idea of England as an island cut off from a larger colonial and racist world: big business, the arms race (173), the Israeli attack (165), five-year-olds looting burned-out shops (178), visions of pre-war Germany, the possible collapse of the money system (185) – all of her family's activities take place "in an atmosphere of war, of riots" (185).

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[10] The references to "career marchers" could well have their origins in particular Thatcherite policies of the early 1980s. In *Britain Under Thatcher*, Anthony Seldon and Daniel Collings explain the Thatcher government's notion of the "demonstration effect," a policy which guided the government's response to a national steel strike in 1980, the year prior to Marlatt's trip to England. According to Seldon and Collings, under the "demonstration effect," the labour dispute "was allowed to run to the bitter end, without the government bowing to union demands or providing extra money" (12). As Hugo Young notes, soon after it began, the steel strike "was designated as an event of mythic portent" for the Conservative party, for it was "the first setpiece confrontation between the forces of the Thatcher Government and the forces of labour" (195). According to Young, the dispute "dragged on for thirteen weeks," presumably teaching "unions everywhere" the lesson the Government wished them to learn: "that the market must rule, and let the devil take the hindmost – no matter how great the social cost, how bloody the factory-gate fighting, or how nonsensical the final price of settlement" (197).

As I will show in the next section of my chapter, although England cannot be held separate from other colonial and racialized spaces across the globe, in *Ghost Works* it is Canada that holds the greatest potential as a space that is safe, peaceful, and free. As Kit says on the final page of the text, "i want to go home . . . where it's nice & boring. here everyone's scared deep down. here everyone's forgotten how to laugh" (187). Canada is figured here as boring, free from the racial traumas that shake the rest of the world, including England. If the traveller's mother found her dream of relative freedom and equality failed, since she did not return to England to become a dressmaker after all, it is because the dream was right, but the destination was wrong. According to the autobiographical narrator, her mother needed to turn not to England, but to Canada in order to fly "against the script" (158). In a familiar construction of Canada as a radically egalitarian land, the narrator suggests that it was Edrys' flight to Canada that allowed her and her daughter, the central autobiographical figure, some measure of freedom from the stultifying scripts of colonialism. At the same time, this supposed freedom in *Ghost Works* is paradoxically enabled, I will argue, by the colonial scripts that precede this flight. The physical and discursive move to Canadian space, then, entails a transformation of, rather than a complete break with, prior colonial scripts.

Migrations of Place: Nations, Bodies

As I suggest in the previous section of this chapter, in the three travel narratives that comprise *Ghost Works*, the autobiographical "she/i" struggles to disassociate herself from other white people she sees as particularly colonizing, from local white gossip that writes her as complicit in racial hierarchies she loathes, and from a narrative of family continuity caught up in dreams of Empire. In my readings of the three travel narratives, I emphasize the ways in which the autobiographical self moves through a profoundly racialized world – even in Marlatt's

England, where issues of race and colonialism are less apparent than in her representations of Mexico or Malaysia. While the previous section examined the problem posed for the traveller by the colonial scripts that write her, in this section I look at the ways in which the autobiographical self attempts to escape these colonial scripts by imagining Canada as a space where radical egalitarianism is possible. My argument here is that at key points in the text, Canada is represented as a place that is relatively free from the historical guilt of colonialism, a place where the weight of colonial histories seems to disappear because the nation is envisioned as new, both in the naturalized sense of untrodden and unspoiled and also in the more cosmopolitan sense of modern and free. For the traveller, then, identifying herself as Canadian becomes a possible means of escaping the colonial scripts that write her since as new place, Canada appears to be cut off from the racialized spaces she encounters elsewhere. I then show the ways in which the traveller's notion of Canada as a space beyond colonial encounters is continually juxtaposed against a competing vision of places and national identities in the text. What Barbour suggests about a single line from Marlatt's *Steveston*, that Marlatt "engages the place as process in time," could also be said of Marlatt's *Ghost Works* ("Marlatt's *Steveston*" 182). In *Ghost Works* place does not exist outside of a history of human (and non-human) activities. The spaces the traveller moves through are infused with memories of other locations, and bodies carry histories that form an important part of what a place is. These historical and embodied memories are important to the articulation of what "Canadianness" means in the text. *Ghost Works* moves between two contradictory articulations of place and national identification, never entirely settling on one or the other. At times, Canada is a place of hope and promise, a place the traveller can identify with in order to escape the (white) ghosts that haunt her. Yet Canada is also represented as a place where colonial whiteness is simply reinvented rather than transcended, so that the traveller rearticulates in Canadian terms, but never entirely escapes, the colonial histories that continue to shape her.

Her desire to imagine Canada as separate from other colonial spaces is continually brought up against ghostly memories of other places and selves that blur the borders between apparently discrete national identities. While Canadian racelessness is affirmed at key points in the text, the traveller cannot unambiguously or unproblematically sustain her belief in a whiteness that is innocent simply because it is Canadian.

In a 1993 letter to Mary Meigs, Marlatt equates immigration to Canada with escape from the guilt of an imperial past. Struggling to write her autobiographical novel *Taken*, a text that resonates in important ways with *Ghost Works*, she worries that she cannot remember the early years well enough; for so many years, she notes, she tried to "drown" her own and her family's past in order to become "Canadian: non-imperial, 'guiltless'" (*Readings* 197).[11] For Marlatt, the notion that Canadianness could somehow sever her from a guilty colonial past is "a neurosis Anglo-Canadians share, & a personal fetish too no doubt" (197). In "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination," an article published a year after the original publication of *How Hug*, Marlatt writes: "Looking back, i think that most of my writing has been a vehicle for entry into what was for me the new place, the new world" (219). As an immigrant teenager in the 1950s, she notes, she enthusiastically became a Canadian citizen, singing Oh Canada, learning Canadian history, and debating the principles of democracy at school, wearing "white bucks and jeans and pencil-line skirts" (221). While she worked hard to become Canadian, at the same time, her mother "wanted to keep up 'English' in our values" (222). According to Marlatt, this division between what she saw as an English home and a Canadian world outside the home "led to a deepening neurosis i could neither understand nor address, as it increased my determination to leave all that behind and completely enter into this place here" (222). In the letter to Meigs and in "Entering In," Marlatt underlines the struggle she underwent to leave a kind of Englishness behind her in order to become Canadian. Both the hope that "Canadian" could mean "non-imperial, 'guiltless'" and the need to resurrect embodied histories that call this (white) guiltlessness into question are crucial to representations of the traveller's white Canadianness in *Ghost Works*.

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[11] That Marlatt republished the travel narratives collected in *Ghost Works* when she was working on her autobiographical novel *Taken* is not surprising, since the two texts share many concerns. In *Taken*, the narrator repeatedly meditates on the nature of ghosts, those bits of the past that return to haunt her, shaping the present in powerful ways. She wonders how three generations in the East shaped her family's sense of Britishness, a Britishness that needed emphasizing precisely because of the years away from Britain and the perceived loss of national identity such distance entailed. Both *Ghost Works* and *Taken* work to bridge the gap between a present self and a colonial past that is necessarily recorded only sketchily and remembered unevenly.

The remainder of this chapter looks first at the promise of Canada as a raceless, innocent space beyond colonialism and second, at the ways in which embodied echoes of other places, times, and selves work to undermine this promise. In *Ghost Works*, I argue, this (white) Canadian innocence is represented in both individual and national terms: in terms of individual Canadians who are seen as white in less colonial ways and who collectively form part an imagined community free from colonial guilt, and in terms of the promise of newness the nation itself holds. In *Zócalo* and "Hungry Ghosts," the autobiographical traveller sees herself as bridging the gulf of racial difference in ways that distinguish her from the American travellers and from most of the British colonials she sees. Significantly, she associates these abilities with being Canadian. While there are hints of the nation itself as a free and equalizing space in "Hungry Ghosts," it is especially in *How Hug* that Canada scintillates as a place of hope and equality, a place the central autobiographical figure can go if not to shed her whiteness entirely, then at least to escape the historical guilt associated with colonialism. In the second part of my argument, I show how this notion of white Canadian innocence is undercut. In *Zócalo*, although the autobiographical traveller longs to separate herself from other North Americans, her journey takes place in the context of a long procession of tourists who travel both with her and before her, so that her swim "in that exotic sea" is not as new or as untainted by colonial histories as it might seem (20). While ghostly memories of colonialism mark the traveller's journey in almost intangible ways in this first travel narrative, it is especially in the second two travel narratives that embodied echoes of the past call into question the notion of Canada as a place of white innocence for the traveller. In "Hungry Ghosts" and *How Hug*, the traveller's colonial British family has left an indelible mark on her own body, her language, and her daily ways of being, a history that ultimately must be incorporated into the notion of what it means for her to be a white Canadian. The three travel narratives, read together, narrate a journey through different meanings of whiteness for a Canadian traveller, and the complex and competing visions of Canadian whiteness that I explore here do not reside in any one of the three narratives in isolation from the others. Both the desire for white innocence and the ghostly traces that call this Canadian racelessness into question are evident not so much in the individual travel narratives, but in the complex threads of race, nation, colonialism, and embodiment that run through the collection *Ghost Works*.

National Imaginings

"[W]e wanted to shout, we're going to Canada aren't we?" (158). "[A]s i photograph him [her son] i am the photo of me with my sisters, the same fear & joy, hands outstretched . . . en route to Canada" (185). At key points in Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, Canada is represented as unspoiled and untrodden, more modern and liberated, yet also more wild and free than anywhere else the traveller moves through either physically or in memory. Near the beginning of *How Hug*, the autobiographical traveller remembers herself as "the child with chocolate smeared across her face" on an earlier visit to England, messy, with skinned knees, one of the "wild colonials roaring around" a quiet English garden, oblivious to the codes of decorum that govern a very English adult world (133). The closing passages of *How Hug* link her son's longing for Canada and his anticipation of their return to a place he sees as beyond fear with an ecstatic moment of dance and wild movement, "a wild beating, blood for the climb, glide, rest, on air current, free we want to be where live things are" (187). In both "Hungry Ghosts" and *How Hug* Canada is associated with a positive kind of childishness, an impishness that disrupts the decorum of colonial English ways. In *How Hug*, the traveller recalls resisting the English manners her mother tried to instill in her, "running down the hall, sliding down bannisters," even crashing two giant wardrobes down in a game that nearly crushes her two small sisters (159). In "Hungry Ghosts," the traveller's sister, who "long ago threw all the house keys in the jungle," refuses the silver basket of toast that Mr. Y offers, her smile glinting "with five year old implacability, even rebellion" (121, 119). Like her sister who impishly rejects colonial codes, the autobiographical traveller flouts the rules of Mr. Y's English dinner table by "expressing an interest in the terrible durian fruit whose stench has been much mythified since we were little" (98). Mr. Y will not even allow durian fruit inside his house, so the traveller steps across the physical boundary between black and white, locating herself outside the house in the servants' quarters. Warned by Mr. Y never to go barefoot for fear of hookworm, the traveller quietly delights in the feel of her bare feet against the cool tile of the floor (100, 120); rejecting the need for slippers, she aligns herself with the Malay cook Ah Yow, who "stands firmly on her flat feet," unafraid of the earth (122).[12]

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[12] At one point the traveller recalls an image of herself as "a little girl waiting, one foot on the white square, one foot on the black, in her white socks & shoes, waiting for them all to be ready, Daddy was taking them out" (122). A few pages earlier, remembering "her feet on the black & white chequered tile," she wonders, "did she jump, from black to black? did she spend a long time waiting? . . . . she wanted to go outside, into the world" (118). The image of a white girl jumping "from black to black" recalls the fluidity of whiteness in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, where Kim becomes so immersed in the local culture that he becomes more Indian than the Indians. In "Hungry Ghosts" the traveller sometimes imagines herself as a kind of fluid (white) person, able to transcend the boundaries of race. At the same time, by imagining discrete white and black checks and a black space she can travel into, she partly reinscribes the constructed line of racial difference as she imagines herself crossing its borders, an ability she insists Mr. Y does not have. She denies that Mr. Y could have any local knowledge: that feet accustomed to shoes

This impish breakdown of colonial order is presented in a context that specifically contrasts an old and outdated English colonialism with a new and highly desireable "Canadianness": "as kids we hated everything 'English' - not because it was English but because we equated what was English with a colonialist attitude" (92). "I'm going to stop this, being haunted by echoes of earlier (age 12 etc) letters & journals, that so stilted proper English. 'To the manner born.' How completely i learned to talk Canadian (how badly i wanted to)" (98). Canada here represents the promise of a different way of being in a new place where a change in language both reflects and produces a new social order. The traveller connects her own refusal to continue her grandmother's colonial dream with her move to a "new continent," one represented as fundamentally more egalitarian, a place with greater opportunities for (white) women than her mother had in colonial Malaya: "you don't understand, *everybody* wears jeans here & i *want* a job. refusing the dream its continuity in what i thought was no man's land (not Rupert's, not the King's), just the trees'" (143). Existing beyond the borders of a colonial and patriarchal past, Canada is a naturalized space here, a place of new beginnings where the old distinctions between bodies are no longer relevant. Often, the promise that Canada holds is represented in terms of gender. At some points in the text, Canada is literally "no man's land" (143), a place where the traveller can be a "'liberated' woman" (100) because the land is supposedly uninscribed by a patriarchy found in places such as British Malaya: "This life would have killed me, purdah, a woman in – the restrictions on movement, the confined reality" (79). As I underline in my reading of *How Hug* above, and as the reference to "purdah" as a confining script for women suggests, in *Ghost Works* issues of gender are always also entangled with scripts of race and colonialism. While the narrator's mother dreams of becoming a seamstress in England, the narrator suggests

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might be particularly susceptible to hookworm, for example, is not a possibility she entertains.

it was en route to Canada that her mother finally learned to fly "against the script," with "no stars to plot this course" (158). Canada is associated with a kind of white female freedom here because the new nation is imagined as a place beyond the borders of the old colonial maps and racialized scripts that structure life both in Malaysia and in England.

In *Ghost Works*, the promise that Canada holds is often represented in individual terms: white Canadian travellers are represented as less oppressive than their American or British counterparts. In this sense, white Canadian egalitarianism manifests itself as a different way of comporting oneself and a different relation to the body in general. White bodies are usually alienated bodies. The people who inhabit such bodies, such as her host Mr. Y in Penang, the Americans on the bus tour in Mexico, or her step-brother in England, are overly individuated, disconnected from their surroundings, separate from a complex web of relations which in an ideal world would form an important part of one's sense of self. Canadian travellers, on the other hand, are less individuated, more able to connect with local people or with the natural world around them. This is an ability that is particularly discovered in travel, through contrast with other travellers. Indeed, at home in Canada, this ability may not be so apparent: "people walk the streets of Vancouver mostly as if they are invisible," the narrator complains at one point (93). Riding down the streets of Penang in a hired trisha, on the other hand, the traveller notes that the body is everywhere visible, connecting people with each other and more generally with the place they inhabit in a very tactile way: "Here people sleep on the sidewalks, piss in the gutters, women nurse their babies by the roadside, everyone selling food & eating it, or fingering goods, or eyeing each other (likewise tactile) - but not separate." (93). It is partly through her travels in Mexico and Malaysia that the autobiographical traveller discovers an ostensibly Canadian difference, a different way of being a white person discovered through the need to connect with what she sees as a very tactile world around her. Through contrasts with other white tourists, through her ability to connect with local people, and through her moments of merging with the land itself, the traveller discovers what in her view is a positive way of being white, something she connects with being Canadian. Particularly in the first two narratives collected in *Ghost Works*, Canadians travel in a way that distinguishes them from their oppressive white counterparts, so that their whiteness either fades away or becomes irrelevant when they join the natural web of relations existing in "other" cultures.

What the autobiographical traveller discovers both in Mexico and in Malaysia is a sense of the material connectedness of all things, the way that plants, animals, and people form a web of relations that she hopes could break down barriers of race, even to the point of dissolving the notion of race itself. This ideal web of connectedness is represented in "Hungry Ghosts" in the form of birdsong and in the narrator's readings of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*. The birdsong and the reading resonate with each other to establish the idea that in a truly shared public space, differences of race, as well as the bodily alienation that accompanies such racial separations, would ideally disappear. In a poem entitled "res publica," the birdsong that awakens the traveller in Penang is imagined as an ideal public space in which all the notes work together to form a greater whole: "each his own / how each does chant / his tributary note / to the great cantata" (81). Reminiscent of the "amniotic" press in the streets (93), the birdsong takes the narrator back to a memory of infancy at the margins of consciousness, something she conceives of as a tactile moment of merging and union: "just to be, in that long childbeing, sentient, but only just, skin (not even 'mine') merging with an air that is full of melody & rain-breath, sound enwrapt –" (84). This sense of tactile connectedness in the natural world finds its echo for the traveller in Arendt's notion of public space, "where one's life takes place in a web of relations held *in common*" (108) – something very different from the colonial settlers' alienated way of being, and different, as well, from the current government policy of Malayanization, in which the cause of rural Malays is advanced, but potentially at the cost of Chinese and Indian families who are "separated off on the basis of race" (94).[13] As the traveller sees it, plants, animals, and people ideally form a web of relations in a natural space where the mutual interdependence of all life is recognized and respected. Looking out the window of the tourist bus in Mexico, for example, the traveller sees "a woman tending oven outdoors on the earth these animals, plants & people share, having nothing else"(52). In this natural space, racial divisions – all divisions, in fact – are either minimized or eradicated. This vision of a web of relations is arguably a noble one. However, what interests me here is what may be suppressed, as Marlatt alludes to in her preface to *Telling It*, by such utopian visions. In particular, as I will explore further below, in *Ghost Works* this natural space of connection with mother/earth is described in terms that overlap images of gestation or birth with ideas of nation, so that the tactile connections and lack of distinctions found in infancy also become properties that accompany the birth of a nation. Issues of gender are entangled with issues of nation here in ways that underscore Canada's newness or difference: as a new nation, Canada is more natural, less alienated, more connected with the earth and its people, free from the racial divisions that haunt older colonial nations. What is forgotten here, of course, is Canada's historical and ongoing implication in a field of racist and colonial relations.

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[13] For discussions of historical tensions among Malays, Chinese, and Indians in Malaysia, see, for example, Emerson 499-500, Ooi xviii-xx, Milner 105-07, and Kaur 9-14. In *A History of Malaysia*, Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya underline some of the historical precedents of the policy of Malayanization Marlatt refers to:

> Up to the mid-1920s the Malays expressed concern at their steadily weakening economic and social position in their own country. While they compared themselves unfavourably with the rapid advances of the migrant Chinese and Indian communities, Malays rarely voiced a violent antagonism toward these groups. But by the late 1920s and the 1930s certain political and economic developments were to radicalize Malay attitudes toward other Asian groups, but especially towards the Chinese. . . . Even prior to the outbreak of World War II, therefore, the Malays throughout the peninsula and even in Borneo had acted jointly in face of what they considered to be Chinese threats to Malay rights and privileges. (252-53)

In *Ghost Works*, white people are distanced from the guilt of colonialism to the extent that they are able to fade into the land and connect with local people, who themselves appear to fade into the landscape. The local people the traveller encounters in Mexico clearly become one with their surroundings: the three native women in the traveller's dream are "clustered together like so many berries on the one bush" (5); chicle hunters stand "barefoot, silent, smelling of earth" (53); a native woman "crouches by the root of a tree," "squatting in an earth she knows cannot surprise her" (58). In all of these descriptions, local Mexicans are either still or silent, part of the natural world itself. In the exception that proves the rule of white colonial alienation, one elderly British couple in Malaysia whom the traveller sees as representing "the moral best of the old system" seem to "fade into the land," "more in touch with the land & the people than anyone else we've met" (91). Their quiet rootedness, like that of the Mexicans, distinguishes them from the American tourists in Mexico and from other British colonials in Malaysia whose inane chatter and general alienation from their surroundings the traveller particularly despises. The clear racial division between the elderly British couple and those who work for them does not entirely disappear, however, partly because they are still "committed to a paternalistic system," something the narrator associates with their age and their Britishness (91). It is significant that Britishness is aligned with age here. Britain and Canada are distinguished partly in temporal terms in "Hungry Ghosts," underscoring the notion of Canada as a new and potentially raceless nation. Anxious to underline her distance from what she sees as an anachronistic colonial world, the traveller claims "it's the end of an era. It ain't *my* era, or Pam's, tho everyone we meet seems to want to suggest it is, implicate us in it. I've never before understood what a big move it was for them [her parents], to come to Canada" (92). Canada here represents the promise of escape from an aging white colonial world. Part of this promise involves the ability to fade into the land –

something the traveller accomplishes, at key points in the text, to a greater extent than the colonial British couple whose ability to fade into the land she so admires.

In a text where fading into the land signifies relative distance from colonial guilt, the description of the traveller in *Zócalo* as a "migratory bird[ ], strange plumage from somewhere up north" takes on particular significance, especially since "north" is clearly associated with Canada (24). This description anticipates the notion of birdsong forming a shared public space in "Hungry Ghosts," so the bird image links the traveller with this natural, tactile, raceless, amniotic space. Moreover, since migratory birds are both a part of and separate from the land to which they migrate, in effect the traveller's Canadianness becomes something that simultaneously distinguishes her from the Mexican landscape and allows her to fade into it, undercutting the feeling of "foreign[ness]" that she feels so acutely at times: "He laughs, you'd like to be a bird? Imagine what it would be like to move in your element feeling all around you air currents or, if you were a fish, currents of water. I've never thought about it, the human is really our element I suppose" (24). In this and other passages, birds and fish are linked with the human world, and being a migratory bird signifies an ease of movement through, and a sense of belonging in, an otherwise foreign human landscape. The idea that a white Canadian traveller can simultaneously be a part of and yet separate from the land she travels through is reinforced when the traveller goes snorkeling, joining what she calls the "slow underwater dance" of the fish (30). In an ecstatic moment of merging with both fish and sea, she twice compares the fish with brilliantly coloured birds (28, 30), so that in effect the traveller becomes not so much a fish but rather one bird among many, a migratory bird fitting in with the currents around her. The traveller's body adapts to the sea, becoming animal-like in this moment of connection: "the black rubber strap" of her mask becomes "almost part of her skin," and afterwards, she "sink[s] onto her towel its warm nap like fur rubbing her back into her body" (30). As migratory bird, fish, or furry animal, surrounded by the amniotic sea, the traveller merges with her surroundings, and this moment of connection leads her to a vision of Mayan faces floating above the bushes: "they look like gods, she says" (31). Finally "swimming in that exotic sea" among all "those colours"she has dreamed about (26), she sees herself as beginning to bridge the gap that separates her from those she wants to write into her autobiographical text; for a moment, she sees "what is given" (31).

In *Ghost Works*, the ability to merge with the land and connect with local people is a particularly Canadian one. This point is emphasized in *Zócalo,* both in the swimming scene described above and in two other scenes that more explicitly underline the importance of national origins. In the first scene, the description of two girls from Calgary is juxtaposed against that of a group of German tourists, whose "white calves flash in the sun as knee after knee under leder hosen lifts over the same stone" (43-44). As the traveller sees it, the German tourists repeat the same old procession without really touching or seeing the land they travel through: "That's not seeing the ruins," the traveller protests (44). The girls from Calgary, on the other hand, wearing jeans and walking shoes, have "traipsed all through the site, without a guidebook, fascinated, even to the crumbled ruin on the far hill" (43). Implicitly white without being overtly racialized as the contrast with the procession of white knees suggests, the "Prairie girls" move in a way that is closer to the land, ranging farther and seeing more than other tourists partly because they recognize their distance from the place they travel through (43). The traveller reads their smile at her as a moment of recognition: it is "the smile of outsiders who recognize their shared alienness. She could almost be sure, you're Canadian?, but only asks, where are you from? Calgary" (43). Like the autobiographical traveller, the two girls both merge with and, at the same time, are radically separate from this foreign land. They direct the traveller to womb-like caves that contrast starkly with the towering vistas offered elsewhere at the ruins, reinforcing the association of Canada with birth into an earthy, feminized, less hierarchical world.

The question the traveller asks the Calgary girls is echoed at the end of *Zócalo*. The exchange with the Mexican hammock seller begins with the question of origins: "From where you come? he asks. Canada" (69). The structural similarity of the two questions links this scene with the previous one. In both cases, Canadianness allows for connection: in the first scene, with the landscape itself, and in the second, with a local Mexican – a human connection the traveller seeks without much success until this point in the text. Wondering how she could explain "Canada" to him, the autobiographical traveller imagines the great distance that separates Canada from Mexico: "what might make sense across the divide he is trying to bridge – up north? beyond the United States? how far does his sense of north extend?" (69). The traveller is surprised when the hammock seller responds by naming a province: "On-tahr-io?" (69). His recognition of the place the traveller comes from is important: if the native family in the traveller's dream refuse to address her questions about place, by the end of *Zócalo*, "Canada" opens up the possibility of exchange, the possibility that she can be recognized other than as one in a sea of white faces here. The hammock seller reminds her, through the trace of maternal origins in his name, that we all come from our mothers, so the question of national origins here leads to a feminist vision that links not only traveller and local person, but potentially all of humanity. While the question of place ostensibly opens up a gulf marked by the distance that "up north" entails, then, it simultaneously enables the traveller to cross this gap, dissolving the racial divide that has plagued her throughout her journey. In the swimming scene, in the description of the Calgary girls, and in the exchange with the Mexican hammock seller, Canada is connected, either directly or indirectly, with images of birth and with origins in mother/earth, reinforcing the idea of the nation as a new place and, at the same time, as part of a natural web of relations.

In all three travel narratives that comprise *Ghost Works*, contrasts between different colonial spaces emphasize the positive, non-racialized, or anti-colonial nature of "Canadianness."

Canada is figured as a new and promising land where a rebirth into egalitarianism is possible, while travelling white Canadians are generally figured as more natural than other white people, able to merge with the land and/or with the local people they encounter. In *Zócalo*, Canada and the United States are distinguished from each other largely in geographical terms. From the vantage point of Mexico, Canada is the Far North, situated beyond the United States both literally and metaphorically, its geographical distance from Mexico paradoxically allowing for a closer proximity or intermingling with the Mexican landscape and the local people. In "Hungry Ghosts" and *How Hug*, England and Canada are distinguished primarily in temporal terms: Canada is the newer, younger nation with the potential to discard the older colonial ways of the parent nation. The contrast with Britain emphasizes a youthful ideal of egalitarianism that partly has its roots in a post-1960s zeal to discard the values and ways of life associated with an older and inequitable establishment.[14] The contrast with the United States can similarly be seen historically: as Raymond Breton notes, in popular discourses of nation preceding the establishment of official multiculturalism in the early 1970s, notions of Canadian identity shifted from an emphasis on participating in a glorious British Empire to contrasts with the neighbouring United States (37-38).

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[14] In "Of the matter," a preface to her 1980 collection *What Matters: Writing 1968-70*, Marlatt discusses some of the origins of her writings in this earlier collection. She notes that she had been living with her husband in California in 1968 and then in Wisconsin in 1969, around the time of her son's birth. Living in another country and "feeling estranged" from her husband and friends, she notes, she

> was moved by the issues raised, & raging around us, by members of my generation – the Vietnam war, freedom of speech, equal rights, environmental ravages. But i didn't feel able to join the struggle, partly because grounds for it in the States seemed not to be my grounds, & living away from homeground i was ignorant of the struggle there. What *was* my ground? At issue, on a large scale, was a coming to own up to (take on) my place in a world i was part of & already compromised in. (*What Matters*, n.p.).

Although *What Matters* pays particular attention to Marlatt's experiences of mothering and childbirth, the concerns she raises in the preface about social protest, alienation, and national contrasts and disjunctions also inform the texts collected in *Ghost Works*.

So if the discourse of anti-establishment generally borrows from 1960s American social movements for equality, the representation of Canada as the Far North works to distinguish Canada and Canadians as in some ways morally superior to Canada's powerful neighbour. While Canada is distinguished from the United States primarily in geographical terms and from Britain primarily in temporal terms, throughout *Ghost Works*, contrasts between nations serve to highlight the promise of Canada as new place, as different, as a place where colonialism appears to drop away and white innocence may be possible.

Ghostly Bodies

In the previous section, I suggested that the autobiographical traveller discovers a kind of white Canadian innocence through the process of travel. Whiteness - indeed, racialization itself - tends to vanish when it is associated with Canadianness in *Ghost Works*, so that white Canadians participate in a merging beyond race that generally eludes white people who are not Canadian. The dream of Canada as a free and naturalized space beyond the borders of old racist and colonial scripts is a powerful one in *Ghost Works*. However, the newness of Canada, its difference from other colonial nations, is at the same time called into question by the ways in which ghostly colonial histories return to haunt the present, robbing the present, and the nation itself, of its apparent newness. While the previous section emphasized the construction of white Canadian innocence, this section focusses on the ways in which this white innocence is also always dismantled for the traveller - often at the very moment when it is most fervently asserted. At times, the traveller sees Canadian whiteness as eerily and uncomfortably related to the colonial whiteness she encounters elsewhere. Echoes of colonialism are largely discovered through the body, for a colonial past continues to haunt her in very bodily ways. Her own changing body and its complex relations to the bodies of others continually disrupts her notion of Canada as a place of white innocence, since for the traveller the past she carries with her ultimately forms part of what both "Canada" and "Canadianness" signify. Travelling forces the autobiographical self to realize, however unevenly, that her dream of white Canadian innocence and escape from a colonial past is largely a self-serving illusion.

In *Zócalo*, the exchange with the hammock seller both underlines and calls into question the promise of connection beyond race and the move beyond colonial whiteness that Canada represents. Indeed, this scene of cross-cultural connection at the end of the first travel narrative is preceded by, and partly produced out, the fear that Canada may not be the promised new world at all, but rather its inverse. Just before this exchange, Canada is figured as "north, a white they do not know," and the traveller must struggle to come out of this place of "invisible bodies on visible streets, those cleaner colder roads we walk, spectral or absent, where no one lives behind the eyes that skim by: that is a kind of hell" (67). In this vision of Canada, Canadian whiteness is not so different from the whiteness the traveller encounters elsewhere, and the conversation with the hammock seller can be read as an attempt to stem the fear that Canada is less than the promising new nation the traveller elsewhere imagines it to be. One important idea the traveller would like to convey to the hammock seller has to do with "the duplicity of map & terrain": "maps are something we are good at," she thinks, "countries in themselves, unreal, but perfectly believable, until one tries to set foot there & the land falls away –" (70-71). This moment of cross-cultural connection itself can be read as part of the traveller's racialized mapmaking, her attempt to imagine a white Canadianness separate from the inequities of race that mark other places. However, in *Ghost Works* this optimistic map does not entirely match the contours of the traveller's lived experience as a colonial body encountering very different bodies. The image of trying to "set foot" in a country that is in the end "unreal" underlines the significance of embodiment to the map's ultimate dissolution here. As soon as the traveller tries to imagine place as something defined not by geography but rather by the embodied histories of the people who live there, the imaginary lines that construct a racially innocent Canadian nation on the map dissolve. Canada is not an innocent space the traveller can step into in order to cleanse herself of a colonial past, but rather a space defined, in large part, by the colonial histories she carries with her.

On the one hand, for the traveller, the body holds the promise of imaginatively connecting with others whose lives she envisions as different from her own. Worried about her whiteness as she travels down the streets of Penang, she finds solace in the notion that "the sun shines on all of us alike" (93). Tourists and local people alike can feel the sun on their bodies, and a kind of shared bodily experience has the potential to erase the gulf of difference, if only momentarily. At the same time, however, the glare of the sun reveals physical differences that the traveller finds significant, for the passage continues: "– everywhere the flare of colour, glint of metallic thread running through a sari, shining flesh, oil gleaming off black hair – we feel pale by comparison, & immaterial (living always in our heads?)" (93). Skin is once again highlighted as a significant marker of racialization, as it is in the dream that opens *Ghost Works*; however, what is especially underlined here is the way the central autobiographical figure feels herself to be distanced from her own body, a distance she believes separates her from the non-white people she sees around her. As the traveller sees it, both in Mexico and in Malaysia bodily experience is placed at the fore of daily living, and her habitual disassociation from her own body cannot allow her to imagine daily life in the places she travels through. Extravagant displays of the body feel "strange" to her: en route to Penang, she finds a nun's body placed on display in a temple in Bangkok, her "not rotting seen as the sign of her spirituality" (78). Her own life, in contrast, seems to be marked by a certain discomfort with the body highlighted through the process of travel, a discomfort that takes many forms. In Malaysia, she remembers that as a child she worried her body would never resemble her mother's: "Abbott & Costello, too fat, I'll never look like you" (113). In England, it is her inability to assure her son's safety that most occupies her: "what was it? besides Alien he thought he was having a heart attack (in his shoulder?) but it was on the wrong side. a muscle spasm? he was himself again so fast. it fills me with dread & not for the first time" (166). Whether it is her own body or the body of a loved one, her inability to control the body worries her, particularly as she moves through cultures where she finds the body's vulnerability underlined – from the worn body of the shoeshine man to the severed hand and leg of a man found in a railway yard mentioned briefly in the poem "crossing by" to the housekeeper Amah, who "had seven children, '& they all died, my dears'" (50, 87, 111).

Although shared bodily experience potentially provides a moment of connection with the people she meets, the traveller often finds that her own experiences of embodiment reflect a Western distancing from the body and a history of economic freedom that have marked her in subtle but unmistakable ways – something she discovers as she moves in places she sees as far from her everyday world in Canada, a world called into question by these other spaces. In Mexico, she finds herself in a panic as she anticipates a three-hour bus ride, worried that her limited Spanish will not be able to direct her to the washroom she desperately needs beforehand (36). The problem of translation is both linguistic and corporeal, for she finds that her habitual, unthinking ways of being in the body do not work in this space. She wonders where local people who live in the streets pee, noting the "pissedon cement (is that where they go?)" (36). That she normally does not have to think about basic bodily functions is emphasized when she contrasts her life with what she imagines as the uncomfortable bodily life of a tamale seller she passes: "(Where *do* they go?) But it's no good, she can't imagine herself bodily into that woman squatting on the step, she can't imagine her day, its ease (or un-ease)" (37). Trying to convince herself that she no longer tries "to control" her body's "vagaries" (37), yet distressed by the pressing necessity of her own bodily functions, she is confronted by the unacknowledged bodily privilege – in this case, the unthinking assumption that there is always easy access to a place to pee – that shapes her life at home in Canada. When she finally finds a place to relieve herself, she wonders where all the "piss & shit" goes, and she imagines that bodily traces of people who have passed through before her all contribute in a barely visible way to the present place she finds herself in (36). While her imagined participation in an embodied human "continuum" could be read as a way to connect with the landscape (56), her primary association is not with local Mexicans, but rather with tourists who continually pass through. The traveller's anxiety concerning basic bodily functions underlines her worry that she cannot translate this place into part of her own narrative without grossly misreading the bodies and the land she sees around her, for her own unconscious ways of being in the body seem to be at odds with the spaces she finds herself in. This bodily incongruence suggests that her efforts to merge may be illusory; at worst, she may be imposing her own feminist desires for connection on a culture that remains entirely other for her. One of her greatest fears is that as a Canadian tourist, she may not be a migratory bird after all, but rather a "pirate[ ]" in a long line of tourist-pirates who steal Mexico from itself, taking home whatever they want to see from the landscape and people before them (23; cf. 57).

Throughout *Ghost Works*, the traveller implicitly identifies herself as Canadian and assumes a kind of Canadian backdrop, an implicit cultural norm against which she measures the places she travels through. The everyday world that she has left behind – and carries with her – is a Canadian world, and this Canadian space is alluded to at various points in the text. In *Zócalo*, for example, "there were roots, pulled them back through earth to people they knew, north, particularly north where the cold light of the stars sputtered & flared, that was home, where her child was & the trees, trees she recognized grew in the rain" (20). Home here is the West Coast, a landscape the traveller can recognize, one that feels safe and familiar compared to the unknown landscape she travels through in Mexico. In Malaysia, when she writes to her lover, she imagines him moving through a material world she recognizes as home: "You're either still in To. or back home – eating at Min's or the Delightful, reading the *Sun* or gazing up at the blue (is it blue?) above the Coca Cola plant from your studio windows. It's strange to be living a day ahead of you, which means nothing since i'm not even in your world" (108). Her distance from Canada at present – "even the humblest Tamil shacks in Bringchang sport TV antennae – everyone's been watching the Olympics in that exotic, foreign, Canadian town" (108) – underlines the way that Canada is her everyday point of reference here. In England, she is an "unwary pedestrian[] looking left" (186), another reference to the Canadian world she has left behind. From the West Coast to Toronto to Montreal, the spaces she imagines as home are Canadian spaces. As Heather Zwicker notes, in *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson argues that novels "buttress the nation. Elements of any particular narrative become meaningful only with regard to the 'socioscape' in which they are set. . . . To put this another way, characters inhabit a world that is only partially represented in, but fully assumed by, the novel. References within the text to other people, places, and events rely on the reader's supplying the appropriate context, often a national one" (Zwicker 162). In Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, the autobiographical traveller does not move through a Canadian world, but "Canada" is an important touchstone throughout; it is the normalized world, the vantage point from which the traveller tries to make sense of the world around her. That she imagines her lover reading the newspaper in a world marked by a different temporality only underlines this point: she has stepped beyond the edge of Canada, beyond the imagined simultaneity that, according to Anderson, plays an important role in forming the nation's "imagined community."

Having stepped beyond this edge, she sometimes fears that Canada is not the new land she wants it to be. In *Ghost Works* a white colonial way of being is learned early, and it is learned in the body. Although change may be possible, the corporeal nature of this colonial instruction makes it far less amenable to conscious change. In *How Hug*, the grandmother particularly recalls this colonial legacy for the traveller. Just as she fixes Edrys' place in family through a snapshot-like memory of a dress, the grandmother includes the traveller in the family line through a reading of her youthful body: "June 21, my grandmother giving back my early self to me in photos she foresees drained of meaning in strangers' hands" (137). As I suggest in an article that explores the idea of "home" in *Ghost Works*, "The logic of family and home implied in the grandmother's gift seems to be binary: either the narrator accepts the gift of her past with the 'baggage' of family attached, or she is cast out beyond the walls of home into strangers' hands, her self drained of proper meaning" ("(Re)Writing Home" 85). What particularly interests me here is that this notion of family is itself constructed in the context of a colonial dream. Susan Knutson claims that the grandmother in "Hungry Ghosts" "is completely unlike her notebook-carrying granddaughter," for the narrator constructs her own identity "in opposition to everything this grandmother represents" (*Narrative* 89). However, the traveller's desire to detach herself from the colonial histories that write her does not mean this detachment is easy or even possible. Her notebook alone will not free her from colonial embodiment, nor will her identification with Canada – despite the way "learn[ing] to talk Canadian" sometimes seems to promise a new identity for her (98).

The fear that plagues the traveller following her mother's death is not just a fear of mortality; it is a white colonial fear of otherness. In "Hungry Ghosts," the colonial fears she was raised with involve restrictions concerning where her body is or is not supposed to be. As she swims in the "muddy brown waves," for example, her father warns her not to touch the "slimy bottom" of the sea "because ikan sembilan with poison spines lurk there" (83). As a child, she could not ride her bicycle in the streets as she so much wanted to, "wobbly & nervous into a world the sound of a gong invokes even now, in the receding splash of cricket hum, treefrogs, the same frenzy to be out, where she imagines the lights are & the people, a fury of ghosts, of drums"

(122-23). If colonial fears involve a kind of bodily alienation, they continue into the traveller's present despite herself, in the way her own body recoils from the natural world. So, for instance, the description of the birdsong that represents a shared public space in "Hungry Ghosts" is itself interrupted by a moment of involuntary bodily recoil: "Today was filled with birdsong – their shared public space a song arena . . . full of life & brilliant there with (just jumped up in fright as a black beetle ran up my skirt!)" (83). Afraid of beetles and snakes, the narrator likewise eyes a cheecha suspiciously, "not at all sure i want to feel those pale pink lizard feet suddenly land here" (97). The colonial fears she was raised with echo through her body in ways that keep her from acting as the free agent she sometimes imagines herself to be. Moreover, her attempts to mitigate these bodily constraints by taking refuge in her identity as a "liberated" Canadian woman are to no avail. She discovers that this new identity itself rests, in part, on old colonial fears: "Growing sense of myself as a Westerner wanting, wanting – experience mostly. . . . Why plans so chain me: wanting too much from the day, wanting too much from others who can never be more than they are. In want: in fear. The 'liberated' woman in me insisting on her freedom & in terror of its being taken away" (100). Mistakenly read as a sign of freedom from a colonial past, the identification of herself as a "liberated" Canadian woman itself has colonial roots, and at the heart of this freedom she finds a fearfulness that she learned early and well.

This colonial fear is especially underlined through the traveller's interconnected relation to snakes and to her mother in *Ghost Works*. The second travel narrative begins with a reference to her ingrained fear of and revulsion from these creatures: "Snakes. Woke up dreaming of the striking head of a cobra – pok – into me, my hand over breast" (76). While Thai temples symbolically embrace all of the natural world by adorning their roofs with heads of snakes, recognizing "the snake's gift of protection" (77), the narrator cannot get beyond her fears: "Snake again signals offlimits, danger to me. I can't get past the snakes in my life" (83). She learned this fear of snakes – and of the world outside her home itself – partly from her mother, who she says "taught me fear but not how to fight" (128). Travelling through her childhood home, the central autobiographical figure attempts to recall what she unconsciously learned about femaleness through her mother, her first model of womanhood. What is striking about these memories is the way colonial power intertwines with a kind of white female mystique, so that the idea of growing into a woman's body becomes inseparable from the colonial privileges, fears and taboos that shape her mother's and also, as she begins to realize, her own life (112-13). Lifting the lid of a steel trunk filled with fragments from her mother's past, the traveller finds memories of "Mem" flooding through her (111-16). If the traveller's mother had little power compared to the white men in her life (176), her greatest source of power derived from her role as *memsahib*. The traveller recalls her mother's voice echoing through the house as she "telephoned down the hill angry for lost sheets, shirts, handkerchiefs, 'they'd rob us blind!' trying to make them understand" (112).[15] To grow up to be a woman is to grow up in a world marked by race and by spaces that the autobiographical self can or cannot move through: "promise of the body i would grow into, if i listened, if i learned to stop breaking it, my word given to you, learned to keep to the house i was meant to inherit" (115). She recalls her mother's anger when she snuck out of the house one day and reached for a flower in the jungle beyond the garden: "reaching to pluck, when the snake, shot across it . . .WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN?" (115). Having learned codes of gender at the same time that she learned codes of race, the traveller finds that the two become nearly inseparable: to be a woman is to be a colonial white woman, or so her mother taught her.

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[15] In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary Marangoly George argues that "the modern *politically authoritative* Englishwoman was made in the colonies: she was first and foremost an imperialist" (37; emphasis in original). Underlining the way the English home in the colonies "represents itself as the empire in miniature," George argues that the English woman "becomes 'of the master race' only in the presence of 'the native' who will hail her as 'memsahib' (literally, 'madame boss')" (51, 50).

While the traveller wishes to believe that this steel trunk is as far from Canadianness as she could get – as she opens the lid she notes that there was "no basement there under the house, no damp concrete shoring up earth, no sawdust bins, no furnace" (111) – elsewhere she suggests that her mother's fears continue to pervade her life. Although she actually holds a "wriggly green viper" in her hands at one point, the photograph that her sister takes as evidence "means nothing," since the film was threaded in wrong and was not "winding forward (as time is supposed to do – well maybe that's it, the strange conjunctions of past & present, a past that undermines the apparent newness of the present, a present that unlocks the hidden recesses of memory or dream which have also coloured it" (105). Holding a snake in her hands, in other words, cannot change the ingrained revulsion from parts of the natural world that she learned early and that she often reads as a sign of white colonial alienation. Near the end of "Hungry Ghosts," it is the mirroring face of her mother, echoes of her mother in herself, that undercut the newness of her Canadian identity: "your mirror caught a glimpse of that place i hid, country of origin, clouding it over with lipstick & powder, making mouths at the face going out to be addressed, assessed by dress & manners you saw thru" (127).

The final passage of *How Hug* and thus *Ghost Works* itself likewise refers to the fear the autobiographical self learned from her mother, a fear that continues to echo through her body long after her first attempts to separate herself from the colonial world she used to inhabit. Despite her desire to step beyond her colonial fears, the traveller cannot ignore the (white) ghosts that haunt her, "claims of the dead in our world (the fear that binds)" (187). At the same time, *Ghost Works* ends on a note of potential freedom from the old scripts of colonialism through movement toward Canada, with the traveller imagining herself as "wild mother dancing upon the waves" as she anticipates returning home with her son (187). This final passage of *Ghost Works* points to the complex entanglement of the present with the past, suggesting both a desire for newness as well as a recognition of the way the past continually shapes the present: "ruffled neck feathers ripple snakelike movement of the neck last vestige of dinosaurs: then lift, this quick wing flap, heart at breast strike up a wild beating, blood for the climb, glide, rest, on air current, free we want to be where live things are" (187). Her Canadian freedom is paradoxically rooted in a colonial past, and previous forms of embodiment continue to shape her here. A number of images from *Ghost Works* coalesce in this passage: echoes of the migratory birds from *Zócalo* combine with the fear of snakes from "Hungry Ghosts" and the fossil fuels that sustain the aircraft at the opening of *How Hug*. In this final passage, as elsewhere in *Ghost Works*, the traveller's continuing desire for connection with the natural world – and thus escape from a colonial past – as she moves toward Canada is juxtaposed against her insistence that bits of the past continue to echo through the present, shaping the present in complex and embodied ways.

In *Ghost Works*, the autobiographical traveller often looks to Canada as a way of escaping what she sees as a white colonial past. Whether comparing herself with Americans tourists, as in *Zócalo*, or with her own family friends and relations, as in "Hungry Ghosts" and *How Hug*, she often imagines her Canadianness as providing her with a way of transcending the petty lives, colonial stereotyping, or recoil from racialized others and from the natural world that she suggests plague other white people in the text. At the same time, her very distancing from these fellow travellers, friends, and relations partly signifies her own fear of a colonialism that travels with her as she moves from one place, one continent, or one embodied relation to another. Throughout *Ghost Works*, embodiment plays a complex role in the central figure's associations and dissociations with others. While everyone lives under the same sun, as she happily observes in "Hungry Ghosts," not everyone has the same relationship to the earth, to other bodies, or to her own body in *Ghost Works*. And although the central figure sometimes imagines white Canadian bodies as transcending problems of race, her own embodied connections with white folks she often disdains and her sense of perplexity as she imagines and interacts with a range of non-white bodies suggest that such imagined transcendence does not take into account the complexity of embodied experiences. As I noted earlier in this chapter, Marlatt is not the only writer to engage with the problem of an imagined white Canadian innocence. What makes Marlatt's *Ghost Works* particularly fascinating to me is the persistence with which Marlatt both engages with a dream of racelessness and partially deconstructs it. I say partially here, because the dream of (white) Canadian racelessness is still a powerful one in *Ghost Works*. Such a dream sometimes can be an admirable one, a striving toward egalitarianism as a model for national imaginings and as a potentially achievable goal. However, such idealized imaginings can easily turn into dreams of white innocence. Such dreams potentially elide the complexity of embodied experiences and risk bolstering ongoing inequities in Canada and elsewhere.

As I will show in the next chapter, Maria Campbell likewise investigates the distance between utopian imaginings of nation and the complexity of embodied lives for those who grow up in the shadow of nation. My reading of Maria Campbell's 1973 autobiography *Halfbreed* underlines just how difficult the dance of citizenship can be for a Métis woman who is seen simultaneously as Indian and non-Indian, whose people are entirely left out of early 1970s debates concerning the inclusion of Indians in Canada. While the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* cannot stand comfortably either within or outside ideas of Canadianness, critics of the text often implicitly read her as a quintessentially Canadian woman whose story is a means of drawing particular Canadians together. Such critics, I will argue, ironically draft the text into a script of inclusive nationhood, a view of nation that Campbell's text largely contests.

CHAPTER THREE

"dancing for a place in society": Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*

> "The Calgary Stampede always needs Indians. There's no need to go out and earn a living on the street. We can fix up outfits for ourselves, and go to pow wows, and put on for white people, and get paid."
>
> I was horrified at what she was saying. I couldn't see myself in an Indian woman's costume, parading around while white people took pictures of me. I asked her if she was serious, did Indians really get paid to be Indians for tourists? Marion answered that business was good in Calgary for Indians. White people said it was a cultural thing, so no one thought it was bad.
>
> Talking to Marion that day I saw myself wearing gaudy feathers and costumes and dancing for a place in society. To me it was the same as putting on a welfare coat to get government money. So I told her, "Forget about being a white man's Indian, and make some real money. That's the only thing this rotten world recognizes and respects."
>
> Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (155-56)

In Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, "dancing for a place in society" involves a perilous double bind. As a single mother worried about losing her children to the relief people who took her brothers and sisters away a few years earlier, the autobiographical "I" desperately needs money to support herself. Although dancing at the Calgary Stampede promises needed income, playing Indian for white tourists involves a capitulation to stereotypes that the autobiographical "I" resists: namely, that Native people are somehow generic or interchangeable, that specificities of history and culture do not matter, and that Native people are objects of consumption freely accessible to the white gaze. In *Halfbreed*, stereotypes of Indianness circulate within a larger economy that works to exoticize, vilify, and at the same time, endlessly categorize Native bodies as a means of regulating the lives of Native people. The autobiographical "I" is called to "danc[e] for a place in society," to signify Indianness for a white audience through her movements, through the way she clothes her body, and through her association with other Indians. At the moment the performer's body comes to signify Indianness, however, complex problems of race, embodiment, and nation are elided. Significantly, the Métis culture the autobiographical "I" comes to identify with, increasingly if also ambiguously throughout the text, is completely left out of the dance, for there is no room for such a borderline identity here. There are only white folks who watch, and generic Indians who dance. White tourists at the Stampede come to see a stereotypical version of frontier Canada reenacted and confirmed: "gaudy feathers and costumes" stand in for the whole of aboriginal culture, and frozen cultural forms are safely relegated to a colourfully imagined past. Partly in response to the hypervisibility of "Indian" and the corresponding invisibility of "Métis" at the time of writing, in *Halfbreed* Campbell works to construct an individual and collective Métis identity that will reestablish a sense of individual worth, community spirit, and collective pride. At the same time, however, both in a title that works to reappropriate a racist epithet and elsewhere, the text draws attention to a framing white gaze, showing how government institutions, cultural displays, historical imaginings, and everyday cross-racial interactions continue to determine Native identities, including Métis identities. For the autobiographical "I," this is the double bind of "dancing for a place in society": "Indianness" presents itself as a pre-given identity, simply "a cultural thing" (155) – even, at times, a means of access to a place in nation, however marginal this place may be. At the same time, generic notions of Indianness work to bar her and others in her community from full personhood, from other forms of nationhood, and from more complex forms of group identity, inhibiting an analysis of the hegemonic frame that calls this dance of imagined belonging into being in the first place.

I begin this chapter with the Stampede dance because it reflects a larger problem of Native identities, embodied relations, and citizenship that Campbell explores in *Halfbreed*. In Campbell's text, "dancing for a place in society" requires dropping aspirations either to individual identity or to group specificity. To join the larger society - and implicitly the nation - the autobiographical self must capitulate to certain generic forms of identity. At the same time, opting out of an oppressive social system is easier said than done. For example, while the dance provides relief from dire economic straits and thus allows for some resistance to racist social hierarchies, it is clear that Native people are not the ones controlling the construction of "Indian" at the Calgary Stampede. Instead, Native people participate in a performance that constructs a collective identity for them, an identity that is highly overdetermined by the scopic structure of the dance itself, by a history of white control over Native populations in Western Canada, and by a commodity culture that constructs identity as an endlessly reproducible and saleable item. The economic support the performance receives locally - "business was good in Calgary for Indians" (155) - and the stamp of approval the dance receives from local white folks suggest the extent to which the dance confirms rather than contests the racial order the autobiographical "I" struggles against. The Stampede dance produces a frontier version of Canadian Indian comforting to the white audience whose presence calls forth the show. The identity that is produced is both homogenized and essentialized, despite the focus on Indian culture. It is local white people who have the power to name the dance "a cultural thing" after all (155), something Native people do by virtue of their "Indianness" no matter what nation or region they come from, where or with whom they grew up, what their gender or age is, or what dance training they might have had. White tourists pay to see this spectacle, confirming for tourists and local folks alike that Indianness exists as a commodity to be bought, sold, and displayed for the pleasure of white people. As icon of Indianness, the dancer is invited to participate in the dream of a racially tolerant nation through her dance and, at the same time, distanced from full citizenship through the racially marked collective identity her body is supposed to display. In contrast with the white viewers at the Stampede whose "place in society" is always already assured, the dancer's access to citizenship takes place through an ostentatious display of race, where individual identity is subsumed to, and paradoxically can only appear through the display of, a fixed and undifferentiated group identity which her body must continually signify.

In this chapter, I examine the way that Campbell works both to construct and to dismantle Native identities in *Halfbreed* in order to nest the autobiographical self in a complex group identity, what she calls "my people," by the end of the text. In some autobiographical texts that work to contest oppressive notions of identity, identity projects are taken up in ways that suggest a simple process of finding identity or of replacing a false identity with a true one. To a large extent, for example, this is the project that Chong takes up in nationalist terms in *The Concubine's Children*; it is also one that Marlatt takes up, if somewhat more ambiguously, in *Ghost Works*. As the previous chapter shows, in Marlatt's text Canadianness is represented as a kind of new or untarnished identity, one that has the potential to save the autobiographical figure from a white colonial past. In Chong's text, as I discuss in the first chapter, both the autobiographical "I" and her mother discover their "true" identity as Canadians, even if this identity is difficult to sustain: "You're Canadian, not Chinese. Stop trying to feel something," Hing insists to her daughter when they travel to meet their long-lost relatives in China (238). Unlike the texts by Marlatt and Chong, if *Halfbreed* posits a true identity for the autobiographical self it is one that foregrounds Métis nationhood. In *Halfbreed*, in other words, a local and communal identity is given priority over a national identity tied to a positive vision of the nation state. At the same time, however, Campbell recognizes the complex ties with the nation state that continue to determine Métis identities. At a simple level, *Halfbreed* seems to tell a classic success story: the autobiographical

"I" discovers her true identity as a Métis woman. She moves from a desire to be accepted in white Canadian society, through spiritual crisis and questioning, finally arriving at a new way of seeing herself as part of an emergent Métis community. Although the finding of an already existing identity is one narrative trajectory that can be traced through *Halfbreed*, this simpler narrative jostles with other complex, competing, sometimes contradictory narratives of identity in the text. The narrative of Métis identity found is itself riddled with tensions between an emergent self distinct *because* she is Métis, a member of a collective, or a self distinguished because she is an *exceptional* Métis and thus in some ways separate from the group, individuated rather than collectively identified. At the same time, these two separate but overlapping narrative trajectories are interrupted by a different kind of interrogation of identity in the text, one that questions the ways in which "Métis" is always already constructed within a hegemonic white Canadian frame, much as "Indian" is constructed in the Stampede dance. Thus the trajectory from unbelonging Canadian to proud Métis is continually blurred by Campbell's articulate analysis of the way even resistant Métis identities are caught up in an inequitable dance of citizenship, race, and unbelonging. Dismantling the difference between notions of individualized, unraced citizenship and problematic group identities, Campbell shows how both rely on a disembodied and ahistorical sense of self, community, and nation that the text ultimately contests.

In *Halfbreed*, both the construction of Métis identities and the interrogation of the white frame that informs this construction, I argue, occur through the agency of the body. In other words, the autobiographical "I" recognizes herself as Métis, exceptional or not, by connecting or disconnecting the fate of her body with the bodily histories of others in her community. This interrogation of bodily histories repeatedly draws attention back to the white frame that constructs bodily meanings for her community, often in arbitrary or punitive ways: through corporeal punishment, through legal distinctions that subsequently become embodied differences, or through what the autobiographical "I" sees as bizarre or cruel bodily rituals. In *Halfbreed*, then, Campbell alternately emphasizes the need to retain and valorize a collective Métis identity, founded in part on a renewed bodily pride and embodied connection with other members in the community, and the need to investigate the ways in which this collective Métis identity is always already constructed by Canadian discourses, material practices, and institutions that work to divide Native people from one another. Neither the construction nor the dismantling of Métis identities takes precedence in *Halfbreed*. For Campbell, rather, both projects are necessary in the early 1970s contexts of emerging Native nationalisms, resistant Native voices, continuing government interventions into Native leadership and solidarity, and competing Native identities. Although the autobiographical "I" partly places her faith in a pan-Indian movement by the end of the text, she refuses to underestimate how difficult, at times even debilitating, the process of constructing such a collective consciousness can be given the legal, economic, and cultural divisions that continue to disrupt Native Canadian communities. For Campbell, then, the interrogation of a radically inequitable dance of citizenship necessitates a double approach of constructing Métis identities even as she calls into question the historical and cultural conditions that usher these and other Native identities into being in the first place.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, "Disappearing Métis Bodies: The White Paper and Native Nationalisms," I examine some of the material, institutional, and historical contexts that make the construction of Métis identity in *Halfbreed* an urgent, difficult, at times contradictory project. I begin by analyzing some of the forces that worked to produce economic disparities, divergent identities, and competing interests among various Native groups in Canada at the time of Campbell's writing. Prime Minister Trudeau's 1969 White Paper on Indian policy engendered a huge debate on the "Indian problem" in the early 1970s. Although the main players in this debate were bitterly divided, the underlying assumption on both sides was that only those who had signed treaties or otherwise entered into legal relations as Indians with the government should be equated with "Indianness," leaving Métis completely outside the question of what role Indians should play in the Canadian nation. At the same time, in *Halfbreed* colonial discourses that represent Indians as childlike or savage, beyond the edges of civil society, work to expel Métis bodies, literally expelling them from the land they occupied in the West and metaphorically expelling them from notions of personhood, rendering questions of inclusive citizenship unthinkable. In *Halfbreed*, colonial discourses of Indianness, whether they include or exclude Métis, leave Métis communities with no place to stand either within the late nineteenth century newly-formed Canadian West or within Trudeau's multicultural Canada a century later. The literal and metaphorical expulsion of Métis bodies from the land partly accounts for the autobiographical narrator's fervent desire to construct a distinct and viable Métis nation, to show that a Métis culture exists as a separate and distinct entity. This separate community cannot be completely disconnected from the Canadian nation, however, since the very borders that define the central figure's people are partly determined through historical and ongoing government interventions into who can and cannot count as "Indian," and what the consequences of such a designation might entail. Thus Campbell is radically caught both within and outside the nation in *Halfbreed*: she cannot simply work to imagine herself within ideas of "Canadianness," as Chong and Marlatt do, since the autobiographical "I" is radically excluded from ideas of nation; nor can she step entirely outside discourses of nation, since she needs to return to Canadian history in order to make sense of what has happened to her people, even to the point of determining who "her people" might be. I conclude this section by showing how Campbell works to step beyond this complex "dance of citizenship," a dance in which she is included seamlessly as a Canadian "Indian" yet simultaneously denied the specificity of her embodied experiences, in three ways: through complicating the central figure's implied trajectory from unbelonging Canadian to proud

Métis woman; through imagining embodied connections with a diverse range of communities; and through dismantling the borders that define her Métis community even as she constructs a sense of "my people" in the text.

In the second section of my chapter, "The Dance of Autobiography: Reading Critics Reading *Halfbreed*," I turn from analyzing representations of "dancing for a place in society" within the pages of Campbell's *Halfbreed* to an examination of a similar dance that takes place when critics and writers, National Film Board producers, journalists, book marketers, and others read *Halfbreed*. I also look at the ways in which Maria Campbell has responded to some of these texts in essays, interviews, and other writings. In many ways, both within the pages of *Halfbreed* as well as in later commentaries, Campbell anticipates her critics by showing how the autobiography itself is, like the Stampede dance, a performance of identity that can only present a life always already incorporated within various hegemonic white frames. While drawing out some uncomfortable similarities between the Stampede dance and the autobiography itself, I am also careful to draw distinctions between them in this section of my chapter, showing how these two performances of identity also diverge in significant ways. In particular, both in *Halfbreed* and in her critical commentaries, Campbell draws attention to these hegemonic frames, assessing their formative and formidable effects on Métis identities. At the same time, she underlines the ways in which identities within her community always exceed the edges of these frames. In this section, I emphasize the ways in which diverse, mainly white commentators on the text have in fact functioned much like the white audience in the Stampede passage, including the autobiographical "I" seamlessly in notions of Canadianness while simultaneously eliding the historical, embodied differences in Métis identities that Campbell underlines in *Halfbreed*. Among other ways, by imagining *Halfbreed* as somehow thoroughly "Canadian" without radically dismantling dominant discourses of national inclusiveness, such critics repeat, however unwittingly, stereotypes of Indian identity that Campbell takes such care to critique in *Halfbreed*. While many critics and commentators work to find the autobiographical "I" a place in (white) society or a place in nation, I argue, this place looks suspiciously like the marginalizing dance that the autobiographical "I" steadfastly refuses, to the extent that such refusal is possible. A number of otherwise diverse critical readings of Campbell's *Halfbreed* assume a model of national inclusiveness that the text implicitly rejects. Underlining Campbell's urgent call for new ways of imagining social belonging, I show how *Halfbreed* both anticipates its critics and reaches beyond their ways of imagining Indianness, individual and collective identities, and citizenship.

Disappearing Métis Bodies: The White Paper and Native Nationalisms

On the cover of the May 1973 issue of *Maclean's* is the picture of a young person with straight black hair, more a child than an adult, with a large tear descending from one of her dark eyes. The title of the issue is "Death of a Great Spirit: Canada's Indians Speak Out." Read together, the picture and title equate "Canada's Indians" with a young, victimized, yet rebellious generation. Likewise, an introductory article by Peter C. Newman imagines Native people in Canada as newly outspoken, wronged, finally beginning to speak as they come of age. While ostensibly denying wardship, the issue subtly underlines the notion of Indians as childlike, tragically silent, at least until this point, in need of white understanding or perhaps even protection as they learn to find their voices. Newman speaks of the need for the "white man" to listen to what "the new generation of Canada's Indian leaders" have to say (3). It is clear both in this introductory article and elsewhere that the presumed audience for this issue of *Maclean's* is white and male: "White Man Bury Your Prejudices and Listen," the subtitle of one of the articles reads (Redbird 26). The magazine intends to bring Native issues to the attention of a white Canadian audience and to bring Native people into the fold of Canadian society, but the inclusive move is also a distancing one. There is a clear line drawn between white observers and Native informants, as the binary language of "us" and "them" in Newman's article suggests: "Maybe we should begin dealing with the Indians in the conviction that *they* have at least as much to teach *us* as *we* can have to impart to *them*" (3; emphasis added). The front page of *Maclean's* announces that the subject of this issue is "Canada's Indians," yet the relationship between "Indians" and "Canada" is less than clear. Whatever the relationship, it is not that of citizens belonging to a nation. "Indians" belong to Canada in some way, in a geographical and perhaps also a paternalist sense, as the use of the possessive in the phrase "Canada's Indians" suggests. At the same time, the contents of the issue make it clear that Native people are separate from the (implicitly white) Canadian nation the magazine purports both to represent and to address.

Included in this May 1973 issue, Newman notes, are statements by three of the new Indian movement's "best writers" (3). One of these statements is an excerpt from the new book *Halfbreed* by Maria Campbell, released the same month by McClelland and Stewart. In the blurb that introduces the excerpt from *Halfbreed*, the binary language of race that pervades this issue of *Maclean's* continues. "The haunting excerpt from *Half-breed* that follows," according to the editorial voice that frames Campbell's text for the reader here, "is a scene many Canadians will recognize. We see these little bands of Indians and Métis as we drive into such towns and cities as Fort Macleod and Prince Albert and The Pas. Only this time we are witnesses through the eyes of one of the people we stare at" (27). The excerpt from Campbell's book is supposed to give white readers access to a world hitherto unknown to "Canadians." The editorial voice assumes that Canadians, the ones who drive by, are white and middle class. There is no common national identity or other connection made between seeing white person and Native object of the gaze. Moreover, the editorial voice assumes that Native experience is in some way generic or interchangeable: "little bands of Indians and Métis" are the same no matter where they are located, outside Fort Macleod or Prince Albert or The Pas. At the same time, the tremendous gulf between white folks who drive by and the "little bands" they stare at can be crossed rather easily by white people. Simply by reading Campbell's text, the blurb suggests, the white reader will understand what it is like to see through Métis eyes. There is no reciprocal gaze of the kind Marlatt describes in *Ghost Works*, where the gaze is returned and white identity is thrown into question. On the contrary, whiteness remains transparent here. Through the act of reading, white eyes see Métis lives from a Métis perspective - or so the blurb suggests.

I begin this section of my chapter with the May 1973 issue of *Maclean's* for two reasons. First, the issue as a whole highlights the way the "Indian problem" had come to centre stage in mainstream Canadian public discourse around the time Campbell's *Halfbreed* was published. The binary language that pervades this issue of *Maclean's* stems largely from a widespread conflation of the term "Indian" with "treaty Indian" or otherwise legally defined Indian in dominant discourses on aboriginality and citizenship in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following the failure of the Trudeau government's White Paper. As I will show, this historical conflation helps explain Campbell's urgent need to construct Métis identity as well as some of the complexities involved in doing so. Second, the editorial blurb that precedes Campbell's text provides a useful entry into the problems of Métis identities produced in the context of an implicitly white Canadian frame, one that defines Indian identities and assumes a kind of detachment from the Indianness it constructs. While the editorial blurb cannot see its own gaze, so that whiteness remains transparent, this is far from the case in Campbell's text. On the contrary, both in the excerpt from *Halfbreed* included in this issue of *Maclean's* as well as in other passages, Campbell highlights the inter-imbrication of predominantly white Canadian institutions, discourses, and practices with Métis lives and identities. The autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* is caught up in myriad pressures facing her community, including the repeated attempts by government agencies to control Native people and divide them from one another, the problematic status of "Métis" in dominant discourses of white-Native relations in Canada, and the ongoing poverty of her people. In *Halfbreed*, Campbell works to imagine a separate, viable, and resistant Métis community. My reading of *Halfbreed* places these imaginative efforts in the context of debates around the "Indian question" in the early 1970s and also in the context of Métis struggles for social justice that preceded Campbell's text. In *Halfbreed*, Campbell presents a more complex form of identity politics than may first appear to readers who focus either on the narrative thread of individual survival or success, or on the narrative thread of collective solidarity and struggle. There is a complex interplay between individual, group, and national identities in the text, as well as a keen and politically astute questioning of the hegemonic foundations of such identities, that can easily be missed if important historical contexts such as the debates over Indian identity that took place at the time of Campbell's writing are overlooked.

When popular attention turned to the plight of the "Indian" in the 1960s and early 1970s, this attention did not necessarily benefit Métis people. In the 1969 White Paper, a highly contested government document which proposed to solve the "Indian problem" by abolishing the special status of aboriginal Canadians, Métis were doubly written out of the Canadian picture both by the proposed policy itself as well as in its aftermath. In *Halfbreed*, Campbell responds to the problematic position of "Métis" following the failure of the White Paper in three ways: first, she underlines the existence of the Métis as a distinct and separate group of people with their own laws, customs, and modes of interaction; second, she outlines an ongoing history of Métis resistance; and third, she shows how white institutions and practices that invade Métis lives and lands have devastating effects on Métis bodies, on community cohesiveness, and on daily life in her community. Partly in response to ongoing threats to individual bodies and to the Métis community, Campbell constructs a defiant Métis self by the end of the text, a self paradoxically defined both through an embodied connection with, and distinction from, what she calls "her people." Instead of seeing the nation as a major means of imagining social inclusiveness, in *Halfbreed* Campbell imagines healing social relations beginning with everyday interactions, with members of different but overlapping communities working together, encountering each others' bodies, and comparing their stories, without necessarily framing either bodies, narratives, or interactions, in the first instance, within discourses of national inclusiveness.

The White Paper and Its Aftermath

Published in 1973, Campbell's *Halfbreed* appeared as part of a rising tide of pan-Indian nationalism and pride that followed the failed White Paper on Indian policy. In this controversial document, the Government of Canada proposed to abolish the paternalist Indian Act, remove references to Indians and Indian lands in the Canadian Constitution, phase out the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, transfer responsibility for Indians to the provinces, and extinguish treaty rights (Boldt 22; Indian Chiefs 6; Frideres 121; Walsh 154). The White Paper argued that the special status of Indians hindered their participation in the larger Canadian society (Frideres 121; Boldt 22). Instead of seeing treaties as solemn promises made to aboriginal people in exchange for the lands they surrendered to the Crown, the White Paper envisioned these agreements as outmoded and outdated documents that did not suit the needs of a modern society. "In effect," as Métis historian Olive Patricia Dickason notes, "treaties would be terminated. According to the White Paper, 'A plain reading of the words revealed the limited and minimal promises which were included in them. . . . The significance of the treaties in meeting the economic, educational, health, and welfare needs of the Indian people has always been limited and will continue to decline'" (Dickason 386; ellipsis in original; cf. Walsh 167). According to the logic of the White Paper, the way to stop the isolation of Indians from the mainstream was to treat

Indians as individuals instead of as communities (Dickason 386; Boldt 22). As sociologist Menno Boldt notes, the Trudeau government "asked Indians to forfeit their special status, their land claims, and their aboriginal rights in exchange for a chance to share equally as *individuals* in Canada's future. In brief, Trudeau's design for justice was to 'decolonize' Indians by making them, in his words, 'Canadians as all other Canadians'" (22; emphasis in original). By calling for a repeal of the Indian Act and an end to the treaties, "the government hoped to abolish what it deemed the false separation between Indian people and the rest of Canadian society" (Canada, *Canadian Indian* 87-88). The government believed that the treaties could be extinguished unilaterally and Indians brought into the mainstream through the removal of archaic legal documents and bureaucracies that merely perpetuated artificial separations between Native people and other Canadians. Although consultations with Native groups were held prior to the release of the White Paper, many Indian leaders felt that these consultations were "a sham. None of their expressed interests, rights, needs, and aspirations had been heeded" (Boldt 66). The sweeping changes proposed by the White Paper, the absence of true consultations with Native groups, and the utter dismissal of historical obligations toward aboriginal people and of aboriginal differences from the mainstream precipitated a massive, highly critical response. Due to the unexpectedly vociferous and outraged response of Canadian Native peoples, the White Paper was eventually abandoned.

Although the proposed government policy promised to abolish Indian difference and hasten the assimilation of Indians into the larger Canadian society, the White Paper essentially had the opposite effect, becoming a catalyst for a revitalized Native movement in Canada: "Ironically, the new policy had served to fan sparks of Indian nationalism. Indian leaders from across the country united in a reaffirmation of their separateness" (Canada, *Canadian Indian* 88). A number of Native leaders articulated the position that Native people's continuing survival "as Indians" rested not on union with, but rather continuing legal distinction from, other Canadians. In his 1969 book *The Unjust Society*, Harold Cardinal protests the Trudeau government's plan to assimilate Indians into the mainstream and to abolish Indian land title:

> Mr. Chrétien [then Minister of Indian Affairs] says, "Get rid of the *Indian Act*. Treat Indians as any other Canadians." Mr. Trudeau says, "Forget the treaties. Let Indians become Canadians." This is the Just Society? To the Indian people, there can be no justice, no just society, until their rights are restored. Nor can there be any faith . . . in white society until our rights are protected by lasting, equitable legislation. (30)

Indians first have to be recognized *as Indians*, Cardinal argues, before any just settlement between whites and Native people and any meaningful participation in the larger society can take place: "No genuine Indian participation in the white world can be expected until the Indian is accepted by himself [sic] and by the non-Indian as an Indian person, with an Indian identity" (24). *Citizens Plus* or the "Red Paper," a document prepared in June 1970 by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta including Cardinal, likewise underlines the importance of treaty rights, of the recognition of aboriginal difference, and of a continuing land base for Native people. According to *Citizens Plus*, "Retaining the legal status of Indians is necessary if Indians are to be treated justly" (9). While *Citizens Plus* was adopted as the official response to the White Paper (Dickason 387), other responses also emphasized an Indian difference that needed to be entrenched in law. Native sociologist J.S. Frideres notes that three major briefs were submitted in response to the White Paper: the *Brown Paper* of British Columbia Indians, the *Red Paper* of Alberta Indians, and the Manitoba Indians' *Wahbung* (122). All three discussed issues pertinent to Indians on reserves (Frideres 123). The *Brown Paper* focussed on "treaties, aboriginal rights and the land issue"; *Wahbung* made the most specific recommendations about changes to the Indian Act, "covering topics such as wills, health and elections of chiefs and councils" (Frideres 124, 122). What interests me the most here is that the Trudeau government's idea of Indianness as something entrenched in the Indian Act, in land claims, and in treaty issues is left unchallenged by these briefs. Although the government wished to abolish the special status implied by these legal documents, the White Paper set up a debate in which Indianness became equated with the very legal distinctions the government wished to abolish.

In many ways, then, the White Paper's focus on extinguishing the special status of Indians shaped the terms of the debate around the Indian question in the immediate aftermath of the proposal and in the years to come. Debates over the "Indian problem" in the late 1960s and early 1970s often circled around the failed White Paper in ways that conflated the term "Indian" with "treaty Indian" or with those otherwise defined as "Indian" in legal terms. Newman's introduction to the May 1973 issue of *Maclean's* provides a typical example. The failure of the White Paper, according to Newman, stemmed from politicians' inability to come to terms with the important issue of Indian difference: "The simplistic notion of the technocrats in Ottawa that Indians can be turned into dark-skinned white men by the removal of a few legal and administrative barriers runs up against the fact that Indian sensibilities, especially after a century of wardship, are not the same as ours" (3). There is a clear distinction between "Indian" sensibilities and "our" (white) sensibilities here; significantly, this Indian difference circles around a difference defined by historical government policies. Only those who find themselves up against the legal and administrative barriers that the White Paper promised to remove are included in the notion of Indian difference here. Thus "Canada's Indians" in the title of the May 1973 issue of *Maclean's* has an ambiguous referent: at times, the phrase refers to all aboriginal peoples in Canada; at other times, only legally defined Indians are included. Writing in 1974, Frideres neatly describes the ambivalence associated with the term "Indian" around the time of Campbell's writing:

> In 1951 a more complex legal definition was introduced, stating that only those individuals who fell under the Indian Act would be classified as "Indians". . . .
>
> [C]ulture or race no longer affect the definition of Indian – today's definition is a legal one. While someone may exhibit all the racial and cultural attributes traditionally associated with "Indianness," if he does not come under the terms of the Indian Act, he is not (in the eyes of the federal and provincial governments) an Indian. (2)

While Frideres rightly attributes this ambivalence to the 1951 Indian Act, I would argue that debates about Indianness following the failure of the White Paper further entrenched the equation of Indianness with legally defined Indians. These debates problematically left Métis racially or culturally inside, but at the same time legally and even conceptually outside, the notion of Indianness.

In brief, then, the Trudeau government's 1969 White Paper sought to abolish special status for Indians; the dominant Native response in the immediate aftermath and in the years to follow was an argument to retain this special status. Nevertheless, a common understanding of Indianness connected the two opposed camps. While Native people vigorously attacked the government position as unethical and illegal, in violation of historic agreements between white people and Native groups, the government's focus on legally defined Indians was retained. In other words, the government White Paper and the response from Native groups together formed a dominant discourse in which Indianness was equated primarily or sometimes solely with those who were defined as Indian by government bureaucracies or legal documents: treaty Indians, Indian Act Indians, Indians living on reserves, and/or those considered Indians by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In the process, both Métis and non-status Indians were left outside the notion of Indianness – even while they were subject to many of the same racist pressures and inequitable structures that other "Indians" faced. In addition, Métis' lack of legal status often left them even worse off than their legally-defined cousins, as Campbell is at pains to show in *Halfbreed*: "We all went to the Indians' Sundances and special gatherings," Campbell writes, "but somehow we never fitted in. We were always the poor relatives, the *awp-pee-tow-koosons* [half people]. They laughed and scorned us. They had land and security, we had nothing. As Daddy put it, 'No pot to piss in or a window to throw it out.'" (*Halfbreed* 25). When Cardinal briefly mentions the Métis in *The Unjust Society*, he uses them to argue that Indians should retain their special status and remain under federal jurisdiction. For Cardinal, the Métis are not so much fellow Indians – he refers to them as "those people" – but rather an example of what Indians do not want to become: "Perhaps the Indian is foolish to examine the plight of the Métis population. Those people have been receiving the benefit of provincial remedial structures for decades and a hell of a lot of them are even worse off than the treaty Indian" (146). Similarly, outlining what they see as the prospects for Indians under the White Paper, the authors of *Citizens Plus* construct a vision of future Indian poverty reminiscent of many Métis lives at the time: "within a generation or shortly after the proposed Indian Lands Act expires our people would be left with no land and consequently the future generation would be condemned to the despair and ugly spectre of urban poverty in ghettos" (Indian Chiefs 5). When the Métis appear at all in dominant discourses of Indianness following the failure of the White Paper, they figure most often as a threat to Indians' special status or as a kind of unthinkable other, an example of what legally defined Indians dread becoming.

The Unacknowledged Shadow of Indianness

It is in this highly charged context of debates about inclusion and exclusion of Indians from Canada – a debate in which Métis figure not so much as a subject of debate, but rather as a kind of unacknowledged shadow of Indianness – that the autobiographical narrator's stated purpose in *Halfbreed* takes on greater resonance: "I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and the dreams" (2). One crucial part of the cultural work performed by *Halfbreed* involves a struggle to make Métis bodies visible in a historical situation where Métis inclusion in Canadian society does not even appear as a topic of debate. In dominant discourses of Indianness at the time of Campbell's writing, Métis figure not so much as potential citizens of Canada who have been excluded, but rather as a kind of foil to a highly contentious Indianness – a shadowy, dreaded "other" necessary to debates over inclusion and exclusion. While dominant discourses at the time discuss the best way to include Indians in the Canadian nation, at a simple level Campbell's *Halfbreed* works as a kind of wake-up call: we are here, we exist, Campbell seems to say, even when questions of her people's existence or place in nation are rendered virtually unthinkable in terms of 1970s debates about Indianness. This project of cultural identification – the inscription of Métis bodies on the land – is not a simple project, however. Describing "what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country" involves contesting complex cultural codes of "Indianness" that render Métis bodies virtually invisible in terms of dominant national debates.

In *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" often finds herself both outside and inside Indianness, subject to homogenizing and essentializing discourses of Indianness, treated according to the stereotype "Indian" yet left without access to the marginal benefits that accrue to legally defined Indians. Her father hunts illegally in the National Park, for example, in order to feed his family, since he does not have the hunting rights accorded to treaty Indians: "it was illegal for Halfbreeds to have game out of season," Campbell writes, "and it was a greater sin to get it in the Park" (59). At one point, her father is caught by the RCMP and imprisoned for six months, throwing the family into even greater poverty than before: "It was a hard six months for all of us. We had no money and no meat" (60-61). When Maria takes on a cleaning job to help feed her family after her mother's death, she is subject to the racist taunts of her employer: "She didn't like Indians and talked in front of me as if I were deaf. She would tell her visitors that we were only good for two things - working and fucking, if someone could get us to do it" (108). According to the employer, Maria is Indian; for the RCMP, however, her father is not Indian. Whether Indian or not, the central figure or her family pay the price. In both cases, a slippage in notions of "Indianness" involves a threat to the family's livelihood: the father cannot hunt to feed his family; the central figure cannot challenge her employer's racist statements for fear of losing her job. Both Indianness and non-Indianness involve an imagined bodily transgression or failure on the part of the Métis: it is a "sin" to hunt in the Park, where Métis bodies are out of place; "Indians" are simultaneously reduced to bodily functions and maligned for their bodies' purported unreliability.

Perhaps the most obvious instance of a harmful slippage in notions of Indianness occurs when Maria turns to the welfare office to try to feed her own family. At the welfare office she is both "Indian" and "not-Indian" at once, with both ascriptions largely defined by white bureaucrats, government agencies, racist stereotypes, and other non-Native discourses and institutions. Refused social assistance the first time for not appearing needy enough, Maria borrows her friend Marion's "welfare coat" and follows her advice to act "ignorant, timid and grateful" in order to get financial assistance (154-55). The white social worker initially tries to send the poorly dressed woman before him to the Department of Indian Affairs. In his eyes, her clothes and submissive demeanour now signify "Indian," just as feathers and powwows do at the Calgary Stampede. When Maria explains that she is Métis and so ineligible for aid through this department, the white social worker reluctantly takes on her case, excusing his mistake with a racist slur: "'I can't see the difference – part Indian, all Indian. You're all the same'" (155). In order to be visible to the larger culture, a visibility made necessary by the dire economic circumstances of her life, her body needs to signify Indian. When she performs Indian, however, distinctions among Native people are lost, Métis disappears, and she is reduced to a generic identity which both helps and harms her at once, an identity, moreover, to which she has only an uncertain claim: if she were eligible for aid through the Department of Indian Affairs, after all, she would not have to perform Indian the way she does to receive aid through the welfare office. The charade at the welfare office and the social worker's racist taunts in response to the central autobiographical figure's enactment of "Indian," his expectation that she will waste the pittance the government has so generously bestowed on her in his eyes, leave her devastated: "I left his office feeling more humiliated and dirty and ashamed than I had ever felt in my life" (155). According to her friend Marion, playing "Indian" sometimes has its advantages. By collaborating with what Marion sees as simply a well-paid farce at the Stampede, Maria may be rewarded with a less painful way of life: "'There's no need to go out and earn a living on the street,'" at least according to Marion (155). Upward class mobility is completely accessible to both of them, Marion suggests, if only Maria is willing to play the card of race, "put on for white people," and thereby choose a better life (155). However, as Campbell shows in the welfare office scene, the way Métis people might make marginal gains through repeating Indian scripts is complicated both by the inconsistent equation of Métis bodies with Indianness as well as by Métis' lack of legal status as Indians.

Given this historical situation, in *Halfbreed* Campbell does not simply work to construct a place for her people in Canadian society and history, as writers such as Cardinal or the Indian

Chiefs of Alberta arguably do for legally-defined Indians.[1] Such a project would be hampered by the way the Métis are always already incorporated in discourses of Indianness at the time of Campbell's writing, in ways that do not consider them potential citizens. Instead, Campbell envisions Métis history as central and longstanding, predating the construction of "Canada" and the invasion of the West by numerous white settlers. After a short introductory chapter, the first sentence of *Halfbreed* envisions the land that is now Saskatchewan as Métis land, free from white settlement: "In the 1860's Saskatchewan was part of what was then called the Northwest Territories and was a land free of towns, barbed-wire fences and farm-houses" (3). Private property and "barbed-wire fences" have no place in this community. Instead, the Métis establish a peaceful government shaped by their own traditions: "There was no government in Saskatchewan at the time and no law and order, so they formed their own, fashioned after their way of life – the order and discipline of the great Buffalo Hunts" (3). While the narrator does not describe the Buffalo Hunts here, Campbell's vision of these expeditions is laid out in *Riel's People*, published five years after *Halfbreed*: the bravest young men were chosen as scouts to look for buffalo or Indian war parties; the hunters galloped through the herd to shoot the buffalo, waiting for the command of the captain; the women skinned and quartered the carcasses after the buffalo were shot; afterward, the successful hunt was celebrated with music and dancing (*Riel's* 15-18). In this disciplined collective, everyone contributes to the good of the community, without the fenced-off divisions that later settlement would bring. Instead of envisioning Métis as excluded from Canada, then, in *Halfbreed* Campbell represents Métis communities and Métis experiences as central, predating white Canadian occupation of the land. Moreover, in her description of the Riel Rebellion which follows, she underlines the stark contrast between the peaceful and disciplined way the Métis organize their lives and the violent clash with the Canadian government, a government that alternately ignores Métis bodies and exaggerates the threat that these bodies pose.

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[1] In *Citizens Plus*, Alan C. Cairns observes that Trudeau's "White Paper was defeated by angry moderates" (165). According to Cairns, following the White Paper, many Indian leaders argued that Indians should be considered "citizens plus," or Canadians with special rights. For example, "Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society*, although it contains a vehement critique of the White Paper, nevertheless underlined the compatibility of Indianness with Canadian citizenship and Canadian identity, and also expressed support for the idea of a Canadian cultural mosaic" (Cairns 68). Likewise, in *Wahbung* the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood "saw no incompatibility between being Indian and being Canadian; referred to Indians contributing to the Canadian mosaic, and to themselves as 'Indians of Canada'" (Cairns 68). The Indian Chiefs of Alberta similarly underline the way Indians play a role in nation in the title of their paper, *Citizens Plus*.

According to the autobiographical narrator, in the eyes of the nineteenth-century colonial government of Canada, Métis bodies were first invisible, an unacknowledged presence on the land, then hypervisible, an unwanted presence that had to be removed through the use of massive force (*Halfbreed* 4-6). After years of neglecting Métis petitions regarding their right to use the land, the government mounted a tremendous military campaign in 1884 to make room for white settlers, who would soon flood the West after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway the following year. The narrator underlines the exaggerated sense of threat the Métis posed in the eyes of the government: "eight thousand troops, five hundred NWMP and white volunteers from throughout the Territories, plus a Gatling gun, arrived to stop Riel, Dumont and one hundred and fifty Halfbreeds" (6). Such massive force suggests that the threat was both material and ideological: the government clearly wanted the land for settlement, but the narrator also implies that the cooperative, collective Métis way of life clashed with the white desire for the barbed-wire fences and farm houses that were soon to come. The final sentence of the first chapter emphasizes the extent to which the Métis were considered a major threat to settlement, to be stopped at all costs: "The total cost to the federal government to stop the Rebellion was $5,000,000" (6). The first chapter of *Halfbreed* does not try to find a place for the Métis in a predominantly white Canadian society. On the contrary, Métis communities and the Canadian government are represented as adversaries. Moreover, the conflict is represented as massively inequitable, with the government marshaling tremendous material resources to oppose the Métis. The Métis, on the other hand, are always already on the run from racist oppression, having moved West "from Ontario and Manitoba to escape the prejudice and hate that comes with the opening of a new land" (3). *Halfbreed* begins, then, with Métis bodies, lives, and communities. Although their bodies are expelled from the land, the Métis are not represented as marginal figures struggling to get in on a national scene. On the contrary, Canada is represented as an uninvited guest, a latecomer, and an intruder.

In *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*, Mohawk political scientist Gerald R. Alfred argues that those who want to synchronize Native values and institutions with those of the dominant society are trapped within a paradigm that emphasizes colonial values (7). According to Alfred, rather than trying to fit their own lives into the dominant culture, many Native peoples see Canadian institutions as transitory and their own cultures as enduring: "Lost on many observers is the fact that most Native peoples view non-Native institutions as transitory and superfluous features of their political existence. The structures which have been created to colonize Native nations do not represent an acceptable framework for co-existence between the indigenous and newcomer societies" (7). In *The Book of Jessica*, a text partly based on Campbell's life that Campbell co-authored with Linda Griffiths in 1989, "Maria" makes a similar point, if somewhat more emphatically: "I know I'm of this country. I know I'm Metis. I'm of this land. Then I guess I'm a Canadian, because that's who the conqueror happens to be today. Who the fuck knows who it's going to be tomorrow?" (98). The autobiographical narrator of *Halfbreed* emphasizes that the late-nineteenth-century Canadian government never seriously considered the Métis as potential citizens. The allocation of land scrip to some Métis and not to others is represented as a divisive maneuver and possibly a stalling tactic while the government amassed forces to sweep the Métis off the land (5). In Campbell's version of Métis history, the colonial government viewed the Métis merely as bodies in the way, something that needed to be swept aside for the progress of the nation.

In the eyes of numerous white officials in the text, Métis bodies are either invisible or inadequate, a physical sign of continuing savagery that no amount of acculturation can change. The notion that Métis bodies are somehow outside the realm of citizenship shapes the lives of the Métis people in *Halfbreed* both during the Riel Rebellion and afterward. When Robbie, the central figure's brother, forgets to clean his ears one day, the teacher scrubs him with a stiff brush, so hard that his neck and wrists bleed (88). Her cruel efforts both punish and metaphorically erase his offending skin, which is literally and painfully removed from parts of his body. Later in the text, when Maria finds the courage to tell a United Church minister her story, he simply offers to call the police (141). Her presence is unwanted, a source of shock, beyond the realm of the imaginable: "My gosh, my gosh!" he repeats (141). Following the government's suppression of the Riel Rebellion, the narrator describes her people's struggle to exist in a world of barbed-wire fences and farmhouses. It is a world structured both physically and metaphorically in ways that do not admit the complex histories and hard-won accomplishments of Métis people: "Fearless men who could brave sub-zero weather and all the dangers associated with living in the bush gave up, frustrated and discouraged. They just did not have the kind of thing inside them that makes farmers" (8). In *Halfbreed*, Métis bodies do not fit dominant ideas of potential citizenship, whether figured in terms of successful farming, fanatical cleaning of the body, or recounting what is seen as a recognizable life story.

At first, I was puzzled by Campbell's insistence that her people were not farmers. Was this not an essentialist, perhaps even a dangerous or self-defeating argument? Are some groups of people suited only to particular lifestyles, and thereby doomed in changing circumstances? However, I now see Campbell's description in a different light. By arguing that her people were not farmers, Campbell underlines both the radical disruption in the lives of her people and the government's narrow way of determining who might make good citizens. This claim highlights not only the massive inequities facing her people, but also the Canadian government's determination to value lives only in terms of agricultural production. The land allotted to the Métis was "covered with rocks and muskeg," the narrator notes, and her people could not afford the equipment needed to farm it (8). Although her grandmother often pulled the plough herself in an effort to break the land and thus gain title to it, she was not able to meet the improvements required (12). Because their way of life was seen as both obsolete and uncivilized in the eyes of the government, the Métis became "squatters on their land and were eventually run off by the new owners" (8). The Buffalo hunt did not confer ownership in the eyes of the government. Only farmers, the narrator underlines, were considered useful and productive citizens, part of a growing national community, worthy of title to the land. In a different context, D.M.R. Bentley notes that Native people in nineteenth-century Canada were subject to ideas of property rights that descended from the eighteenth-century philosopher John Locke (34). According to Bentley, "Canada's native peoples" were seen by early Canadians "as among those who had no rights in property because, in Locke's terms, they had not 'mixed their labour' with the land and, hence, 'removed it from a state of nature'" (34). Moreover, as Bentley attests, this idea of property rights merged with the nineteenth-century notion that societies develop through four distinct stages, a savage stage based on hunting and gathering, a barbaric stage based on herding, an agricultural stage based on farming, and a commercial stage based on trading (34). The "great leap forward" was considered to occur at the agricultural stage, with the first two stages held as "rough" and "rude" (34). In *Halfbreed*, the Canadian government refuses to acknowledge the existence or worth of bodies that have a different relationship with the land. The sweeping clear of the land in the Riel Rebellion suggests that nineteenth-century notions of savagery marked the government's view of the Métis.

The narrator's claim that her people were not farmers is thus a statement of cultural resistance: her people were not farmers, both because the odds were stacked against them and because the valuing of people only in terms of farming and land only in terms of agricultural production are problematic assumptions that the text contests. From the beginning, the narrator shows, Métis bodies did not fit the government's map of Canada.

The depiction of the Riel Rebellion and its aftermath works as a kind of interpretive lens in *Halfbreed*, one that encourages a skeptical view of seemingly inclusive national identities, of white interventions into the lives of the central figure's community, and of various government agencies and projects, even those that seem to work on behalf of the Métis. In *Halfbreed*, Métis communities and Canadian government continually clash, even when government actions seem to be designed to alleviate Métis suffering. Given the historical experience of Métis expulsion and the erasure of Métis bodies from the land, it does not come as a surprise that the teacher who loves to sing "O Canada" does not like Métis children: "I can still see her whenever I hear that song, waving her arms up and down, completely off key and getting all red in the face from the effort" (52). For the autobiographical "I," the national anthem is a kind of ridiculous parody of harmonious social relations, reflected in the off-key notes of "O Canada," embodied in the wildly gesticulating figure of her Métis-hating teacher. When yet another white teacher arrives, the relations between teacher and students do not change a great deal. A classroom discussion using Native people as an example of the poor who "inherit the Kingdom of Heaven" ultimately leads to Maria being banished to the corner, holding up a Bible for the rest of the afternoon: "I became very angry and said, 'Big deal. So us poor Halfbreeds and Indians are to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, but not till we're dead. Keep it!' My teacher was furious" (61). Although the teacher's rhetoric suggests she values inclusion, her classroom practices ultimately displace Métis issues to the sidelines, and Maria's Métis body is banished from the class. Government agencies and practices continually undermine Métis lives, self-esteem, and community cohesiveness. At the same time, Campbell emphasizes an ongoing history of Métis resistance that is thoroughly enmeshed in the messy, embodied relations between various white folks and her own people. Her great-grandmother Cheechum, for example, steals ammunition and smuggles information to the Métis during the Riel Rebellion (10); the village joker acts retarded for the teacher "because the whites thought we were anyway," undermining white scripts of Indianness even as he plays them out (48); Maria's father refuses the hypocritical prayers of the local priest and burns the charity boxes given by white families, who habitually taunt Métis children for wearing their hand-me-downs (27, 30); Maria fights "every white kid" in the school when her father is mocked for his work to better the lives of Métis people (74). These acts of resistance are forged out of the difficult circumstances the Métis find themselves in, and Campbell is not afraid to underline the doubleness, the sadness, or the irony embedded in some of these resistant acts. Cheechum's resistance is partly in defiance of her jealous white husband, who takes her along to Rebellion meetings because he does not trust her to be faithful while he is away; when he finds out about her smuggling activities, he publically flogs her so cruelly that she is scarred for life (10). Maria finds it is not just the white kids, but the Métis who laugh and make jokes about her dad, and she finds this the cruellest blow of all. While she learns defiance from her great-grandmother, sometimes this defiance is partly directed against her own people, a practice Cheechum herself warns against: during one of many dances that turns into a dangerous brawl, for example, Cheechum opens a trapdoor for the men to fall into, hitting them on the head with her cane when they try to climb out (56).

One striking example of collective Métis resistance that simultaneously underlines the ingenuity of the central figure's people, the shaping of her community by the larger white society, and the inherent doubleness of acts of resistance involves an unsolved murder case in the community. After Gene is killed at a fight after a party, the community pulls together to keep the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from hearing about the incident. When the case finally does come up in court, the Métis "needed interpreters so if an English-French interpreter was called they would say that they talked only Cree and when a Cree speaker was brought in it was vice versa. By the time the stories were translated, they were so mixed up that the case was closed" (69). In this incident, the Métis use the hybrid nature of their community to their advantage, feigning ignorance, like the village joker does, in order to thwart the investigators. The investigation itself nevertheless emphasizes the long reach of the white community into the lives of the central figure's people. If the relief people can remove Métis bodies from homes without warning, as they do when they take Maria's siblings away, the Mounties can intrude even after death, stealing a corpse and performing what are portrayed as strange rituals on it. When the central figure sneaks off with her brother "to investigate" the investigators, they arrive at an abandoned house where the officials take Gene's remains: "The body was on a table, naked, with the head over the edge. Gene's hair was hanging to the floor. He had had short hair when he was buried. A doctor was sawing the top of his head off and we felt so sick that we climbed down and raced home and jumped into bed" (68). The community is collectively horrified: "For weeks," the narrator notes, "we all had nightmares and no one ever went near the house. Someone finally burned it" (69). It is not a horror of death, since Maria was not afraid of bodies that were prepared for funeral services at her childhood home (68). Rather, the horror stems from the power white officials have over the bodies and lives of her people. The gothic scene in the abandoned house vividly underscores the way Métis bodies and lives are continually shaped by white interference. Gene's body is strangely reshaped, almost beyond recognition: his hair was short, but now it is long; his head is sawed off; and his naked body is left to the whims of the doctor. Although Gene's death partly draws the community together, the subsequent investigation emphasizes the vulnerability of Métis bodies to a kind of figurative and literal rescripting by the larger white culture. At the same time, the community is vulnerable to internal division, for a community member must have informed the police for the investigation to occur. Although the community pulls together to protect the man who perhaps inadvertently killed Gene, this form of rebellion also ironically reinforces a form of violence within the community by subtly condoning the ongoing fights that plague the community and by underlining that this violence must remain the community's business.

Métis defiance of white social codes takes many forms in *Halfbreed,* including the community's refusal to cooperate with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Maria's unwillingness to participate in the Stampede dance, and her father's move to a new house to protect his family from the relief people who come looking for his children. When Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris come to her community in the 1940s, they become her childhood heroes, and for the first time, she hears about the possibility of sustained collective resistance. Through juxtaposition, Campbell contrasts ineffectual provincial government programs for the Métis - "now we're CCF horses," the village comic jokes when he sees Métis pulling stumps and trees in a government make-work program - with the radical agenda of Brady and Norris, who underline "almost word for word what I have heard our leaders discuss today" (70, 73).[2] While Brady and Norris bring hope to the community, these hopes are eventually dashed. Her father joins the campaign at great cost to his family, since they rely on his trapping income for their survival. After a struggle which brings Mounties and wardens to their house repeatedly, her father eventually becomes "another defeated man" (75). Moreover, when the men who had come to lead her people "found government jobs," they "didn't have time for us anymore" (75-76). The growing Native movement that Maria participates in during the late 1960s, then, has two Métis precedents to draw on, the Rebellion of the 1880s and the abortive movement lead by Brady and Norris in the 1940s. Outlining the high hopes, tremendous efforts, successes and failures of the earlier resistance movements, the narrator underlines what she feels the current movement should learn from previous experience. In particular, the necessity of maintaining a critical distance from government agendas is something Campbell learned both from historical experience and from Norris himself when she visited him in the hospital shortly before his death (Dobbin 253; cf. Campbell "You" 44). Through all three historical moments of resistance as well as in everyday rebellions, then, the autobiographical narrator emphasizes that the Canadian government in all its manifestations - including social workers, teachers, politicians, Community Development staff, RCMP officers, and others - work to undermine the lives, bodies, and communities of Métis people.

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[2] As Cairns notes, "CCF policy objectives were virtually identical to the later White Paper of the federal government. . . . The goal was to transform Indians into normal, taxpaying, service-receiving citizens of the province, indistinguishable from other provincial citizens" (56). According to Dobbin, government funded reports in the early 1960s ultimately condemned CCF policy in northern Saskatchewan as woefully inadequate: "The reports contrasted the meagre resources allotted to native people with the benefits of forest and mineral wealth being reaped by southern [Saskatchewan] society" (212).

In this section of my chapter, I have argued that debates concerning the Trudeau government's White Paper in the late 1960s and early 1970s left Métis not simply as subjects excluded from Canadian citizenship, but rather as a kind of unacknowledged shadow of Indianness in debates over the inclusion of Indians in Canada. At the time of Campbell's writing, the notion of "Indianness" slipped so that at times it included, while at other times it excluded, Métis people. Both the inclusion and the exclusion often worked to the disadvantage of Métis people. As D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier note in their 1975 book *The Métis: Canada's Forgotten People*, from 1960 onwards,

> The public were concerned [about Indians] in a general way, without understanding the complexity of the problem, and demanded that instant, simple solutions be devised. . . .A brown skin equalled Indian and everyone wanted to

> be his friend and protector. Métis people found, to their sorrow, that when they presented their unique problems, the general public and many government officials translated the requests into programs and grants designed to help the Indians. The harder the Métis worked, the more attention [legally defined] Indians received. (163)

Given this historical situation, in *Halfbreed* Campbell does not work to find the Métis a place in nation. Instead, she represents Métis history and Métis occupation of what is now Saskatchewan as prior to Canada's arrival on the scene. She shows how government interventions have negative effects on Métis bodies, lives, and communities. She emphasizes both everyday acts of rebellion as well as three key historical moments of Métis resistance, moments when Métis people worked to protect their community or to change the material conditions of their lives. Finally, she inscribes Métis bodies on the land that is now Canada, underlining their material presence in the face of dominant discourses of "Indianness" that refuse even to pose the question of Métis citizenship.

Narrator and Protagonist

In *Halfbreed*, resistance grows in ambivalent, sometimes unpredictable ways. The position of the Métis at the sidelines of Canadian discourses of citizenship, national inclusiveness, and belonging partly determine the forms of Métis resistance, as does the control of the larger white community over Métis bodies and lives. The complexity of resistance is underlined by the interplay between two kinds of autobiographical "I"s in the text, namely, the growing protagonist and the older narrator. To illustrate the importance of the distinction between narrator and protagonist in *Halfbreed*, I turn to a seminal essay by autobiography critic James Olney in which he examines the use of memory in autobiography. In his reading of Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Olney underlines the difference between the author of the text and the central autobiographical figure: "Richard Wright is not the same person as the hero of that book, not the same as 'I' or 'Richard' or the 'black boy,' not by several light years. 'Black Boy' (and now I mean the central figure of the book) is the creation, or re-creation if you will, of someone who is himself *not* 'black boy'; of someone, in fact, who is infinitely far removed from that identity" (244-45). The end of the identity "black boy," Olney notes, brings about "the eventual birth of Richard Wright" (245). In *Halfbreed* there is a similar distinction to be made between the autobiographical *narrator* and the autobiographical protagonist. While the narrator places Métis lives at the centre from the beginning of the text, the autobiographical protagonist's interactions with others in her community underline just how difficult the process of resisting colonial authority can be.

As a child, the autobiographical protagonist feels the marginalization of the Métis acutely, in ways that make it difficult for her to identify with her people. When the white children at school tease her cruelly about the typical Métis fare she brings for lunch – "Gophers, gophers, Road Allowance people eat gophers" (50) – she internalizes their taunts, blames her family for her predicament, and lashes out at her mother when she returns home: "I kicked her and said that I hated her, Daddy, and 'all of you no-good Halfbreeds'" (50). Her great-grandmother Cheechum, her mentor and confidante, explains the destructive self-hatred fostered through such racist taunts. White people work to break up the community, Cheechum tells her, so that the Métis end up fighting amongst themselves: "'The white man saw that that was a more powerful weapon than anything else with which to beat the Halfbreeds, and he used it and still does today. Already they are using it on you. They try to make you hate your people'" (51). Only much later does the protagonist understand the divisive pressures and the importance of solidarity that Cheechum underlines. As a child she wants to get as far away from her people as possible so she can become happy and wealthy. When her father gives her "a good licking" for stealing a piece of paper, she imagines running away: "I would . . . get a job and make lots of money. Then I would buy a new car, a red satin dress and red shoes, and I would drive by the house, toot the horn and everyone would come out. I would not speak to them and they would all be sorry" (66). It is not that the young protagonist dreams of becoming a white middle-class Canadian: although she dreams of wealth, and although whiteness shapes her vision of success here, her dreams are not necessarily specific in terms of nation. Rather, she dreams of becoming a subject free from history, free from the people whom she can only see at this point in her life as a burden. For the young protagonist, her family and her community hold her down and keep her from self-fulfillment; the red dress becomes a symbol of escape. A few years later, Maria does wear an expensive red dress and red shoes to a school dance. The scene repeats the cycle of violence within the community that Cheechum deplores. At the dance, Maria distances herself from Sophie, an eccentrically-dressed Métis neighbour her father sends along as chaperone: "a girl from school came over and asked loudly, 'Is that woman your mother?' Everyone started to snicker and I looked at her and said, 'That old, ugly Indian?'" (101). With her scathing comment, Maria hopes to gain recognition from her white classmates; however, her devastating rejection of Sophie repeats the self-loathing and hatred of her people that Maria is trying to escape.

For the young protagonist, resistance becomes synonymous with leaving her community and finding fulfillment through the larger white culture. Her efforts to escape range from rejecting her Métis boyfriend to marry a white man she barely knows, whose purported wealth she believes will save her brothers and sisters from separation, to moving to Vancouver, a city inhabited in her imagination solely by happy, wealthy people with access to material goods and expensive foods, "toothbrushes, fruit and all those other symbols of white ideals of success" that her family could never afford (33). The motif of chasing after what the dominant culture considers a beautiful life leads to the juxtaposition of two striking images of the protagonist's body. In both cases, distance from her people is associated with an intense bodily pain. When she turns to prostitution in Vancouver, Maria goes to a fashionable dress shop, gets her hair cut and styled at a beauty parlour, and finds the woman staring back at her in the mirror nearly unrecognizable: "She looked cold and unreal, rich and expensive" (134). Having achieved a look she dreamed of as a girl, she feels terrible: "I lost something that afternoon. Something inside of me died"(134). Her life in Vancouver leads to a downward spiral of drug addiction and abuse, and her efforts to get away from her people nearly kill her: "I was skin and bones with running sores all over my body. I was bruised and battered from the beatings I got from Trapper and whoever else felt like beating me" (144). She finds the "beautiful world full of beautiful people with no feelings of guilt or shame" only when she is hooked on heroin, and the unreal world she finds herself in is both unsustainable and ultimately self-destructive (137). It is only when she begins to reconnect with her people, envisioning herself as a subject in history, that she is able to escape the physical and emotional anguish she finds in Vancouver, first through remembering Cheechum's words and finally through reconnecting with, and trying to help, her people. When she becomes involved in a revolutionary group through her friend Marie Smallface, a Blood woman from Cardston, she begins "to see a lot of things differently" (178). However, she finds socialist theories less important to her than the knowledge of the histories that have shaped her life and the lives of her people: "Finally, I got rid of the books: the Russian Revolution wasn't important to me anyway. Instead I started reading Canadian and Indian history" (178). For the young protagonist, the healing movement into history, and toward her people, occurs only near the end of the text. While the narrator underlines the importance of community throughout, then, Campbell portrays this understanding as hard-won, something that the protagonist learns only through harsh, nearly fatal experience.

The second last paragraph of *Halfbreed* envisions a contemporary community of Métis, Native, and perhaps even non-Native people working together: "I believe that one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we will need each other to survive. Then together we will fight our common enemies. Change will come because this time we won't give up. There is growing evidence of that today" (184). By the end of the text, the autobiographical "I" places her faith in a revived Native movement and a newfound solidarity, both in struggling Métis communities and in collective movements for social change. In the final words of the text, there is both a confident self and a committed political community, and the protagonist seems to be completely immersed in this community, defined particularly in relation to other Métis and Native lives: "Cheechum said, 'You'll find yourself, and you'll find brothers and sisters.' I have brothers and sisters, all over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive" (184). However, the lines that distinguish the narrator from the protagonist sometimes become blurred in *Halfbreed*. At times, for example, a kind of writerly self-confidence develops through separation from community for the autobiographical "I," complicating the trajectory from unknowing young protagonist to community-identified older narrator. Moreover, particularly toward the end of the text, Maria participates in more than one community at once, in ways that simultaneously consolidate a sense of "my people" and call the borders of her Métis community into question. Maria's identification with the bodily fates and embodied histories of various oppressed communities simultaneously confirms and calls into question the distinct embodiment of her people. In *Halfbreed*, then, an ongoing interplay between autobiographical narrator and protagonist complicates the picture of community and undercuts a neat, linear trajectory from unbelonging Canadian to proud Métis woman. This blurring of the line between narrator and protagonist is important particularly because it suggests that there are no neat and easy solutions to be found for the complex problems of Métis lives and identities that Campbell represents in *Halfbreed*. It is not that the protagonist simply needs to grow and see the world in the right way in order for change to occur. While

Campbell represents the growth of the autobiographical "I" as significant and as a necessary step in the process of social change, she shows that individual growth is not nearly enough to radically change a social system that continually undercuts the lives of her people.

The remainder of this section is divided into two parts, both of which underline complexities of identity that interrupt the simple success story of an oppressive identity lost and a collective Métis identity found. In "Métis Bodies," I examine how the autobiographical "I" is both connected with and dissociated from her community in *Halfbreed*. It is through connecting with the bodily fates of others in her community and identifying with their material struggles, I argue, that Maria envisions herself as a self nested within a communal identity and also, at times, as a representative Métis self. At the same time, however, she sets herself apart from her community by distinguishing her body from other Métis bodies. The older autobiographical narrator sometimes imagines her people as part of a past she grew beyond. Moreover, even as a child, the protagonist carries her body differently than do others in her community, and this difference is portrayed as enabling her to become a successful self, an exceptional Métis subject. This success is represented in ambivalent ways: at times, it is something that arises from a past marked by bodily distinction from others in the community; at other times, it comes from a clean break with the past, so that the autobiographical "I" becomes phoenix-like, with a new body and self arising from the ashes of a troubled past. Thus, the first part of my argument here considers how Maria either immerses herself in or distinguishes herself from her community in order to envision herself as an autobiographical subject, a Métis woman with a story to tell. Significantly, this story does not derive primarily from the idea of herself as Canadian, but rather from a vision of herself ambivalently immersed in community, both part of and separate from a people she both loves and hates.

In the second part of my argument, "Shaping Communities," I examine how this community in *Halfbreed* ultimately cannot be completely separated from ideas of nation, particularly from disturbing discourses of "Indianness" that are incorporated in ideas of Canada. It is not that the autobiographical "I" suddenly sees herself as a Canadian after all, making connections with other Canadians in the way that Denise Chong does in *The Concubine's Children*. Instead, this part of my chapter examines the ways in which larger national discourses of Indianness always already shape the community the autobiographical "I" sees herself alternately as representing, rejecting, or simply being a part of. Rather than looking at how Maria imagines herself either as part of or as separate from her community, then, this part of my argument focusses on the ways in which the borders of this community are themselves called into question in the text. Once again, the distinction between narrator and protagonist becomes useful, since the older narrator and the younger protagonist imagine the breakdown of borders that define community in different ways. The autobiographical narrator calls into question the distinctness of her own community by showing how white Canadian institutions and practices have worked to separate Métis from other Native peoples. The borders between these groups are ultimately artificial or at least unhelpful, she suggests, even if a number of material differences persist. While the older narrator underlines the way that her people and their treaty Indian relatives may not be so different after all, the younger protagonist eventually realizes that the difficult struggle to care for one's own body and for the bodies of loved ones is shared by others beyond her own community – even beyond the borders of "Indianness." However, this moment of embodied connection does not lead her to a kind of multicultural vision where distinctions between groups disappear. It is not that we Canadians are all the same through our differences – as Denise Chong ultimately suggests in her speech on citizenship, "On Being Canadian." Instead, in *Halfbreed*, the central figure's recognition of the vanishing borders of her community allows her, paradoxically, to identify finally with her people, to envision herself as "Métis," and to work toward a pan-Indian movement by the end of the text. While she cannot ultimately free herself from national discourses of Indianness that shape her community, neither does she simply accept a disembodied sense of Canadian identity or generic Canadian Indianness that the Stampede dance, the dance of citizenship, would encourage her to accept.

Métis Bodies

In *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" works to represent her Métis community as a distinct and separate people with their own laws, customs, and modes of interaction. She underlines the separateness of her community by describing many practices, traditions, and beliefs unique to the people in her community. In various ways throughout the text, she emphasizes that her people are different from the white people and from the treaty Indians who live near her community. She distinguishes her people in terms of religion, cultural traditions, modes of entertainment, gender roles, ways of earning a living, sense of humour, superstitiousness, participation in festivals, ways of celebrating special occasions, and so on. At weddings during her childhood, for example, the bride always wears a dress "altered so many times you could see all the different stitches" (57). The dress underlines both the sharing and resourcefulness prevalent in Maria's community, as well as the ongoing material need which makes these qualities necessary for community survival. At funerals, likewise, the pallbearers wear suits that are "old and out of style," ill-fitting because there are only so many suits to go around. Despite their lack of fashion, the suits play an honoured role in the community: "As far as everyone was concerned the suits were holy" (67-68). The narrator underlines the difference between her community's funerals and funerals in the larger (white) society: "Our funerals were never like the funerals here. . . . We grieved, but in a different way. The women cried, but they accepted death, and when it came, met it with great strength and kept their grief inside as they did with so many other things" (67). Her childhood community, the narrator emphasizes, was different from the white Canadian society she now lives in. Even if some traditions are shared with other groups – wedding and funerals in themselves are not unique to Métis culture – the distinct ways her people enact these traditions, Maria suggests, make her community a separate group.

In *Halfbreed*, this Métis difference is repeatedly figured in terms of the body. Being Métis is not simply represented as a collection of practices or beliefs, something that can be taken up or simply dropped as the central figure moves into a predominantly white culture later in her life. Rather, it is a kind of visceral experience. Religion or festivals or special occasions, in other words, are all described in terms of bodily practices or in terms of the effects on the body: the wedding dresses, the funeral suits, the silently grieving women. During Christmas holidays, the narrator notes, "[w]e stuffed ourselves . . . until we hurt, because it would be a year before we would eat like that again" (55). The community's practice of sharing whatever they have is represented here in terms of huge holiday meals and collectively aching stomachs. Likewise, Indian medicine is "hard to describe or explain" to someone outside the central figure's culture "as it is something you cannot see or hear, only feel and smell. . . . The smell is unlike anything else: heavy and musky and almost human," so frightening sometimes that "your hair almost stands up on end" (44-45). Superstitiousness is experienced in the body: after nighttime stories about ghosts and spooks, the autobiographical "I" recalls "being so frightened that I couldn't pee for the longest time" (35). The "laughter and love and warmth" (75) of her people is also portrayed in bodily terms, from her brother smashing through a window in an unintentional enactment of Grannie's ghost stories (92) to the raucous practical joke played on Uncle Robert after he spooks the young Maria in the graveyard (65). Religion too is tactile and sensual. "In general the Halfbreeds were good Catholics," the narrator notes, and this Catholicism partly reflects the community spirit she sees as lacking among white people. While "the Catholic churches were beautiful with waxed hardwood floors and pews," the Protestant churches, with their "small congregations of white people," were "grey with age and dusty inside, their yards overgrown with brambles and weeds" (31). Being Métis involves an eclectic and unique collection of embodied experiences: dancing the Red River Jig, eating stewed moose meat and pemmican and mashed potatoes (55), seeing the drooling face of the slow-witted Chi-Georges who is very much a part of the community (24), climbing on a father who comes home from the traplines smelling "like wild mink" (54), having hair that "reeked of bear fat, but I guess we were in style," for Cheechum oils and braids her great-granddaughter's hair just as she does her own (43). In *Halfbreed*, then, the autobiographical "I" is connected with her people not simply because she shares their beliefs – being Métis is not just a matter of ideology – but because she shares their visceral, tactile, sensual experiences. For the autobiographical "I," being part of her people is a lived experience, an embodied feeling. It is something that comes from the gut rather than the head. It is a taste, a sound, a smell.

Both as a child and as an adult, the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* underlines the bodily deprivation her people endure, something she sees as a historical and ongoing part of her culture. In *Halfbreed*, a continuous struggle to provide even basic bodily needs shapes the lives of her people and separates her people from white people and from other Indians, including the protagonist's treaty Indian relatives. Like other parts of Métis culture, material poverty is likewise figured in terms of the body. When the central figure's aunt Qua Chich, a treaty Indian woman, lets her poor Métis relations use her strong Clydesdale horses to plough and rake the gardens, "[t]he horses just ended up as Halfbreed horses – fat today, skinny tomorrow" (21). The material poverty of her people is measured through contrasts with treaty Indians such as Grannie Dubuque, whose visits mean "boxes of goodies, clothing, bedding and toys" (45), as well as contrasts with white people such as the "fat and greedy" priest who always times his trips to visit their house at mealtimes: "He ate and ate and I would watch him with hatred. . . . After he left we had to eat the scraps" (29). Material poverty sets her community apart from other Canadians: "I used to believe there was no worse sin in this country than to be poor," the poorest of all being the Métis (61). For the young protagonist, a kind of bodily deprivation is sometimes all there is to her people: "I cried and shouted that the other kids had oranges, apples, cakes, and nice clothes and that all we had were gophers, moose meat, ugly dresses and patchy pants" (50). After her mother dies during childbirth, the twelve-year-old protagonist works hard to provide for her younger siblings. She cans over two hundred quarts of berries in the fall, mends old clothes, makes yarn by hand, knits socks and sweaters, finds milk and diapers for the new baby, washes clothes on a scrub board, bakes, and cooks in an endless round of domestic chores (83). In these passages, Maria is presented as a kind of representative Métis subject through sharing what Campbell describes as a common Métis experience, the hard work and bodily deprivation reflected in the fate of Qua Chich's "Halfbreed horses" (21).

The young protagonist learns to read her gendered body in ways that are highly inflected by her experience of, and participation in, her community. Lines of communication are sometimes broken in a community scrambling to survive, sometimes with comic, sometimes with tragic effects. The early death of her mother leaves her without maternal guidance during difficult teenage years, and when she has her first period, she is forced to ask her brother to find out why she is bleeding; later, she nervously carries out what she calls "operation miscarriage," jumping from rooftops and performing other crazy acts when she mistakenly thinks she is pregnant, even though she is still a virgin (96). In a situation similar to that faced by May-ying in *The Concubine's Children*, stereotypes of the Métis sometimes fall hardest on the women in the community. When Maria attends a community dance at a local hall without her father's knowledge, his angry comments afterward suggest that acting like the other women in her community makes her "a common whore" (116). Her mother is held up as an example of proper ladylike behaviour, yet Maria recognizes that being part of a Métis community somehow precludes being considered a lady: "if mom was a lady," she retorts, "why did she run off with him?"(116; cf. 15). The women in the community are not afforded the protection traditionally associated with being a "lady." On the contrary, the violence that is directed toward their community is often deflected onto the women: after white men who come to cause trouble in the community leave, "[o]ur men would be sick and hung over and ugly-mean, the mothers black and blue and swollen" (38). In *Halfbreed*, bruises become one tragic bodily sign of being a Métis woman. When Maria becomes an addict and prostitute in the slums of Vancouver, this terrible point in her life is described in bodily terms that link her with the battered women in her childhood community (144). Even when she is furthest from her community – at the lowest point in her life, she stays away from Native people because she feels she would not survive if she had to share (143) – she is connected with other Métis women's lives through sharing the bodily fate of the mothers in her childhood community. At this and other points in the text, it is through the body that Maria is portrayed as a representative subject, a woman whose body touches and echoes with the lives of others, particularly other women, in her community. It is through her visceral experience of the smell of medicine, the sight of the beautiful Catholic church, the feeling of her stuffed stomach at Christmastime, the bruising of her body, the raucous laughter of her people, or the slippery touch of bear grease in her hair that Maria aligns herself with the fates of other Métis people in the text. She shares their joys and sorrows in bodily terms. It is in this way that her life is portrayed as representative: "I write this for all of you," Campbell writes, "to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country" (2). Her life story touches the lives of other Métis women, Campbell underlines, particularly in the ways that they often share a similar bodily fate.

While the autobiographical "I" is connected with her people through a kind of shared bodily experience, at some points in the text, she is represented as separate from her people. This separateness is also represented largely in embodied ways, through distinctions made between her body and the bodies of others in her community. As a child, she notices that the men and women in her community always walk with their heads down; however, she refuses to follow their example: "I made up my mind then and there that I would never walk like them; I would walk tall and straight" (37; cf. 51). While learning to hold her head up is a movement toward solidarity with her people, it is also, paradoxically, a move away from them. This sense of separateness from her people is echoed elsewhere in the text. At a theatre in St. Michele, for example, she sees a film that represents Riel and Dumont, the heroes of the Northwest Rebellion, as buffoons. "Everyone was laughing hysterically, including Halfbreeds," but the narrator simply concludes: "it's no wonder my people are so fucked up" (111). The autobiographical "I" is particularly angry with the way her hero's body is portrayed in humiliating ways, a portrayal she sees as part of a racist history that erodes the self-esteem of her people: "Gabriel Dumont looked filthy and gross. In one scene his suspenders broke and his pants fell down, and he went galloping away on a scabby horse in his long red underwear" (111). Here Maria is separate from her people because of her ability to interpret the ridiculous bodies in the film, connecting them with the ongoing suppression of her people. Only she and Cheechum, her mentor who leaves the theatre in disgust, seem to understand the ways in which the Riel movie works on the community in pernicious ways. The incident at the school dance involving Sophie, her chaperone, likewise underlines the difference between Maria and some other Métis, represented here in the abject figure of Sophie. While the younger protagonist clearly distances herself from Sophie, in more subtle ways, the older narrator does likewise. A few pages before this incident, Sophie is described in less than generous terms: "She was an ugly woman with a huge hooked nose, greyish yellow hair and [she] had scarcely any teeth" (100). This negative description of Sophie's body is not mitigated through ironic distancing, contextualized in terms of hegemonic notions of acceptable appearances, or contradicted in any other way. For the narrator, Sophie's body *is* ugly. The chapter ends with Sophie's regret about her lack of Métis activism: "She said she regretted that instead of trying to improve things for herself and for our people, she had let herself believe she was merely a 'no good Halfbreed'" (103). Here, Sophie's body and her abjection, her lack of belief in herself and her people, are one. The description underlines, through contrast, the narrator's difference: she will not be like Sophie. While the scene could be considered a call to action – do not let yourself be like Sophie, Campbell seems to be saying to her Métis readers – her negative description of Sophie also risks blaming Sophie for her own predicament. Although the narrator regrets her earlier rejection of Sophie, then, she continues to distance herself from her Métis neighbour in more subtle ways. As in the theatre incident, solidarity with the Métis cause partly involves a separation from her people and from what she sees as a common but tragic acceptance of a kind of abject embodiment.

In these and other passages, the sense of personhood the autobiographical "I" achieves in the text derives largely from a sense of individual fortitude. The autobiographical "I" is represented, in other words, as a successful subject, individualized, unique, separate from those in her community who fail to raise their heads or who laugh at racist films. Even as a child, then, the autobiographical "I" is represented as being somehow differently embodied than others in her community. While her parents' and grandparents' generation are portrayed as a strong but largely defeated people, the narrator looks back to her own younger body and sees in it the promise of a different way of being. A kind of greater knowledge seems to be reflected in her body, in the way the autobiographical "I" carries herself, in her attitudes toward her body and toward the bodies of others. This inner strength and pride distinguishes her from others in her community and from those who have tried, and failed, to change the lives of her people. In this way, the protagonist is figured as a successful autobiographical subject, one who emerges from a difficult background and ends up in a different place – a place far removed from her Métis childhood. Yet this different place is also anticipated by her mentor, Cheechum, so this individualization is prefigured in her childhood, stemming from her connection with her great-grandmother yet also defining her as different from the vast majority of her people. This narrative of individual success, then, recalls Maria's childhood dream of escape from a difficult life, although there are important differences. As a child, the protagonist simply wants to leave her people behind; as an adult, she wants to change not only her own life, but the lives of her people. While her adult dream of breaking away from difficult circumstances underlines the importance of solidarity with her community, the transformation from a kind of Métis abjection to Métis leadership is an ambiguous move in terms of her relationship with her people. Although her early Métis pride is partly a move toward her people, toward accepting and being a part of them, it is also paradoxically a move away from them.

Maria's difference from her community is represented in complex ways. Unlike a classic success story, there is no single point of transition to a new life. Rather, Maria is both apart from and separate from her community, with this separation defined in different ways: sometimes as individual bodily difference that manifests early on; at other times, as a new beginning, a clean break with her past. This ambivalence is important, because it suggests that the individual success story is always complicated by an ongoing relationship with community, one that is continually being negotiated and renegotiated as the narrator rethinks her troubled past. In the introduction to *Halfbreed*, Maria goes home for the first time in years, but finds that the happiness she is seeking cannot be found by going home: "Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself. That is when I decided to write about my life" (2). Here the narrator envisions herself primarily as a separate subject, one who can only find peace within herself, so it is partly her distance from her childhood home and from her people that allows her to write. This distance is figured at one point as a kind of phoenix-like transformation, except that the point of transformation is not precisely pinpointed, but instead represented organically through the image of sprouting tree shoots. When she attends a conference at the Prince Albert Penitentiary, the inmates she has been corresponding with give her a painting: "The painting was of a burnt-out forest, all black, bleak and dismal. In the center was a burnt-out tree stump, and at the roots were little green shoots sprouting up. The forest was like our lives, and the shoots represented hope" (171). At this point in the text, Maria seems to arise from the ashes. The gift of the painting is a moment of both solidarity and separation. While the painting includes her children's and the prisoners' lives, it is Maria's newly successful life that most embodies this hope for the prisoners. As one old prisoner tells her, "if I'd ever had a daughter I would have wished for one like you. You're a good girl" (172). Maria is a model subject here, a daughter figure whose life the prisoners rejoice in: when her children come to live with her again after a long separation, the prisoners have a celebration (171). Her distance from, yet at the same time proximity to, the prisoners is likewise underlined when she is invited to speak at a women's prison. Her friend Arlene's mother, who is in jail for forgery, recognizes the ambivalence in their relationship in the way she interacts with Maria. A former nurse, Arlene's mother offered to perform an abortion for free years ago when Maria could not afford to pay her (152). While Maria identified strongly with Arlene's mother and her difficult life at the time – "we weren't any different from any other women. . . . Why do we have to fight so damn hard for so little?" (153) – the growing distance between the two women is emphasized by Arlene's words and actions. "She grabbed my hand as I walked by and said, 'You made it, Maria. I knew you would.' She went back to her cell before my speech was finished. She didn't want to talk to me again, and I understood" (153). No words are necessary between the two women. The protagonist both understands Arlene's mother and is radically separated from her, just as she is close to, yet separate from, the inmates at Prince Albert Penitentiary.

One point that should be underlined here is that Arlene's mother and the inmates are not necessarily Métis. Arlene is simply "[a] girl with whom I had become friends," and her mother's race is unspecified (152). The prison inmates are members of Alcoholics Anonymous, a group Maria becomes involved with after being incarcerated at Alberta Hospital. The racially diverse chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous the autobiographical "I" attends regularly "was a mixture of real down-and-outers, some white, some Native, drunks from skid-row, ex-cons from various institutions and women like myself. It was good: I understood these people, and they understood me. It was here that I first met the people that would play an important role in the Native movement in Alberta" (167). As her identification with Arlene, the prison inmates, and other marginalized people illustrates, the circle of those with whom Maria identifies broadens significantly by the end of the text. This broadening of identification is important. Toward the end of *Halfbreed*, the lines between groups such as Indian and Métis increasingly begin to blur, so that Maria defines herself in relation to a complex set of overlapping communities. In a number of passages, she is as much concerned with breaking down the barriers between Indians, Métis, and other groups as she is with constructing a distinct and viable Métis community.

These barriers are not broken down through recourse to the idea of a common Canadianness. Indeed, Maria's desire to reconnect with her people after living on the streets is precipitated by the way a group of Native *Americans* befriends her when she hitchhikes from Mexico back to Canada (143). Canadianness seems almost irrelevant here. These too are her people, Maria suggests. They care for her the way members of her own childhood community would have: "They didn't ask me any questions, just took me home and fed me, and when I wanted to talk they listened. They were a big family with an old grandmother who could easily have been my Cheechum" (143). While Canadian institutions, discourses, and practices are relevant elsewhere in the text, defining Métis and other Native lives, here the Canadian border becomes another arbitrary line drawn between various Native peoples. Moreover, gender divisions within the emerging Native movement underline for her that struggles are necessary on different fronts: when she mentions the need for a halfway house for women on the streets, for example, one of the men in the group tells her she "hate[s] men" and probably needs "a good lay" (177). As Maria broadens the groups of people with whom she identifies beyond the borders of "Métis" to prisoners, women on the streets, and other "real down-and-outers," (167), the phrase "my people" likewise broadens. While it generally refers to Métis people and particularly to the community she grew up in, this is not its sole meaning. After she meets the American Indians, she begins to equate the phrase "my people" with all Native people, a group she both loves and hates at once. She is moved by their sharing and generosity, yet angered at what she sees as their failings – such as a seeming refusal to "[fight] back, instead of giving up" (143; cf. 117) – even if she believes that her people's difficulties ultimately stem from the racism and colonialism that frames their lives. By the end of the text, the Métis are not her only people. In *Halfbreed*, the construction of a discrete Métis community and the dismantling of the discursive and historical borders that construct this community, then, are both necessary in the project of redefining Native lives and honouring what Maria refers to, in various ways, as her people.

Shaping Communities

Before turning to critical readings of *Halfbreed* in the next section, I examine further here the ways in which the autobiographical "I" dismantles the borders that define her Métis community even as she constructs a sense of "my people" in the text. At times, the lines drawn between

Indian and Métis seem absolute; at other times, these borders break down in ways that suggest both an interaction with, and significant efforts to move beyond, post-1969 discourses of "Indianness" I outlined earlier in this section. In *Halfbreed*, efforts to define the central figure's community are sometimes linked to a distinction between Métis and treaty Indians. Religious beliefs, temperament, eye colour, land ownership, and material wealth are some of the characteristics the autobiographical "I" underlines to distinguish the Métis from their treaty Indian cousins. This distinction often involves differences in voice and physical bearing, characteristic action and deportment. At one point, for example, the narrator claims that the Métis are loud, active, and outspoken, while treaty Indians are quiet, dignified, and passive: "There was never much love lost between Indians and Halfbreeds. They were completely different from us – quiet when we were noisy, dignified even at dances and get-togethers. Indians were very passive – they would get angry at things done to them but would never fight back, whereas Halfbreeds were quick-tempered – quick to fight, but quick to forgive and forget" (25; cf. 26, 111). While descriptions of Métis activity and Indian passivity can be read as problematically essentializing the differences between the two groups, these descriptions also need to be considered in light of a historical situation in which it was crucial to show both Indians and white Canadians that a distinct and positive Métis culture existed. In his afterword to *The New Peoples*, Robert K. Thomas underlines some of the thorny issues involved in defining Métis identity, given a social context that emphasizes legal distinctions between Native peoples. According to Thomas, "to the extent that Canadian native and American Indian peoples have been persuaded by the peculiar logic of categories created by whites, métis [sic] must distance themselves from the peoples with whom they may feel the strongest ethnic, social and political affinity in order to preserve a separate métis peoplehood" (250). While Thomas connects a Métis desire for political autonomy largely with "categories created by whites," I would argue that the exclusive logic of the White Paper and its aftermath in the early 1970s made efforts to outline a distinct Métis community, a community specifically different from treaty Indians, an important cultural project and a necessary part of Métis cultural resistance – however much these categories ultimately collapse under close scrutiny, as they do in Campbell's *Halfbreed* as well.

In the passage from *Halfbreed* quoted above, the difference between treaty Indians and Métis appears absolute. In other parts of the text, however, the narrator calls such categorical distinctions into question. When the central figure's mother dies, for example, Grannie Dubuque comes to stay with the family over the Christmas holidays to help fill the void in their lives. The autobiographical "I" contradicts her earlier description of passive and quiet treaty Indians in the description of her treaty Indian grandmother: "where Mom had been quiet, she was noisy and full of fun" (91). Grannie Dubuque acts more like a Métis than a treaty Indian according to the narrator's earlier categorization, while the central figure's mother, a Métis woman, is the quiet one. While examples of people who do not fit the mould illustrate the impossibility of separating the two groups in any definitive way, even more telling are the narrator's comments about white people's categorizations of Native people and about her own earlier ways of distinguishing the Métis from other Indian groups. Cheechum's people on her mother's side were not reserve Indians, but this difference is simply a matter of historical accident: "Even though they were Indians they were never part of a reserve, as they weren't present when the treaty-makers came" (10). Here, a white gaze determines Indian identities, so that the distinction between groups becomes arbitrary, a matter of one's ancestors having been in a particular place at a particular time. Similarly, during a trip to Montreal Lake, the young protagonist is captivated by the blue eyes of the treaty Indians who live there, since she is often teased about her own green eyes by her darker-eyed relatives (95): "Cheechum said that these people were descendants of the first Hudson's Bay Scots to come to our North, and that despite the fact that they were treaty Indian they were more Halfbreed than we were" (43). The older narrator clearly laughs in a good-hearted way at her childhood belief in what eyes might signify, even while she distances herself from the self-deprecating stereotypes suggested by these earlier views: "As a child I believed that any Indian unfortunate enough to have blue eyes must have the devil Scot in him or her, and I would think, 'There goes another spawn of Satan.' I was very disappointed when the first Scot I met was brown-eyed, short and meek-looking instead of the legendary figure I envisioned – a bearded giant with wild hair and blazing blue eyes" (43). Similarly, the narrator calls into question the way the young protagonist understands religion as a way of distinguishing her people from their treaty Indians cousins. Told by the nuns that the Anglican church on the reserve was founded by "fornicators and adulterers," she finds the figure of Henry VIII intriguing: "Even though I was supposed to think of him as a wicked, sinful man, I rather liked him because he was an exciting figure, but I was disappointed that he belonged to the Indians instead of the Halfbreeds" (32). Such passages call into question the dividing line between the Métis and their Indian relatives by contrasting the protagonist's perspective with the older narrator's more informed view: blue-eyed Native people with Scottish blood are not the "spawn of Satan," Henry VIII does not belong to the Indians, and the nuns' distinctions between religions are both mean-spirited and divisive.

Near the end of the text, the narrator recalls how Treaty Indians rejected a proposal for a united Native voice: "The proposal for a federation was rejected by the Treaty Indians. They felt that the militant stand that would be taken by such an organization would jeopardize their Treaty rights. 'The Halfbreeds,' they said, 'have nothing to lose, so they can afford to be militant'" (182). Paradoxically, what allows the autobiographical "I" both to identify with her Métis community and, at the same time, to reach out to other Native people are experiences that connect her with others beyond either of these groups. In a 1982 article, Campbell underlines how important it was for her to learn about the histories of various marginal groups in order finally to come to terms with the troubled history of her people:

> to analyze our own political situation, we need to understand that there were other good people that were equally oppressed. Perhaps not in the same way but by the same system. I couldn't understand my own history, even after hearing stories and reading the history that was written until I was able to find and to read what was happening in the Ukrainian community and in the Mennonite community: why the people came here; what happened to them when they came here. Then I started moving out of my own little circle and looking at the whole area. I started really thinking and not closing myself in, walking around thinking that I'm the only one. (Campbell et al. "Panel" 78-79)

In *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" finally connects with a number of displaced peoples and communities. When she is a single, unemployed mother, for example, she is offered food, shelter, and a job as a waitress by the Sings, a Chinese family who are themselves subject to racist taunts (127-28). Her stay with them both recalls and calls into question stereotypes of Chineseness that circled around the only Chinese person she knew previously, an old man who also ran a café: "People said he ate cats, had lots of money and was extremely dangerous. . . . But these people were kind and happy. Their food was delicious" (128). Later, she painfully identifies with the plight of other women incarcerated at Alberta Hospital, the mental institute she wakes up in after she attempts suicide: the woman "with huge breasts" who "would stop and offer us milkshakes," the "crying and babbling" old women "in all stages of undress" whom the nurse casually dismisses as "vegetables" (164). These people become fellow or sister outsiders. The autobiographical "I" begins to see her own life reflected in the lives of recovering alcoholics, poor women, prisoners, and others punished in bodily ways by an inequitable system, from the "tiny, fragile" prostitute who dies of an overdose, to the psychiatric patient and former nurse who had "slashed her wrists after the break-up of her marriage" (135, 164). It is these broader connections that allow her to connect, finally, with her people, to identify herself with her people, however ambiguously, by the end of the text. When a Métis man she loves asks to marry her early in the text, she replies, "You've got to be joking! I'm going to do something with my life besides make more Halfbreeds" (117). After she marries an abusive white man and ends up on the streets, she feels she can no longer go home: "I'd thought I was too good for my people. . . . I would never be one of them again" (139). After travelling home to Saskatchewan, however, she becomes involved in the Native movement so she can change the lives of her people: "the horrible conditions of my people and my talk with Cheechum made me feel there was no time to waste" (177). The horrible conditions she refers to are reflected in the bodies of her people: the old men with "open, swollen infected cuts," the "drunken women with faces badly scarred and bruised," "the empty, despairing faces" (173). The description of her people's bodies resonates with descriptions of other abject bodies in the text. Instead of distancing herself from them as she does with Sophie as a teenager, however, the autobiographical "I" now connects herself with her people, having identified first with other troubled bodies. The boundaries that define her people become blurred, the borders between Métis, Indian and even some non-Indian groups largely dismantled, then, at the very moment that she deliberately takes up a Métis identity. The autobiographical "I" becomes a representative and/or exceptional Métis subject, at once singular and communal, both separated from her people and intimately connected with them.

So what do all these representative and exceptional, constructed and dismantled Native identities have to do with national identities? In a word, national identities seem to become almost irrelevant by the end of the text. In *Halfbreed* Native communities and communal identities come first. Canadianness enters into representations of identity largely in terms of illustrating how white Canadian institutions, discourses, and practices have created a complex range of Native identities, often to the detriment of Native communities. Canadian discourses of Indianness expel Métis bodies in *Halfbreed*, so that questions of Métis identity and questions of citizenship radically conflict. Rather than imagining new social identities encompassed within a national framework, then, *Halfbreed* figuratively leaves the nation behind in order to concentrate on local communities. In other words, there is no room for a multicultural dance of citizenship that blurs distinctions between groups even while constructing essentialist categories such as "Indian," since these categories, supposed to produce meaningful identities, clearly do not do so in *Halfbreed*. Instead, they are part of a process of the division and homogenization of identities, a process that Campbell contests not only by describing the pernicious material effects of labels such as "Indian" but also by focussing not on national identifications, but on embodied connections within local communities. The mature autobiographical "I" does not so much envision herself as a Canadian. Rather, she is represented as a community worker, counter-government activist, or even revolutionary Métis figure by the end of the text, a woman who places her energies with the broadening, but always outsider, community she calls "my people."

The texts by Chong and Marlatt, discussed in Chapters One and Two above, repeatedly represent the autobiographical self as Canadian, and Canada, however ambiguously, as a kind of shimmering object of desire. In *The Concubine's Children*, the autobiographical "I" revalues her grandmother by reimagining her as a Canadian pioneer, a Westernized woman who gives the gift of Canada to her descendants. In *Ghost Works*, the central autobiographical figure envisions herself as a new or displaced Canadian, and her adopted country as a race-free space, a place of new beginnings where she can leave a colonial whiteness behind her. In *Halfbreed*, on the other hand, Canada is not at all a shimmering object of desire. In *Halfbreed* "O Canada" can only be thought of ironically, sung by a teacher who dislikes Métis children. Maria is presented as more

Métis than Canadian, even if this Métis identity is also always dismantled. "My people" becomes an affectionate label for a group whose boundaries are increasingly blurred, a signifier often roughly equivalent to "Métis" but also, at the same time, signifying other marginalized communities that overlap, and often conflict, with one another. Maria is both intimately connected with, and radically separate from, a people she both loves and hates, a people she sometimes sees through the lens of racist stereotypes and government separations she also resists. In *Halfbreed*, it is not to Canada but rather to her people, however ambiguously defined, that Maria finally owes her allegiance. Both drawing herself toward her people and pushing them away, she nests her identity, in complex and conflicted ways, in what she calls "my people."

The Dance of Autobiography: Reading Critics Reading *Halfbreed*

In the first section of this chapter, I argued that by the end of *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" identifies herself more as a Métis woman than as a Canadian. Concerned with the plight of those she calls "my people," she works to change the conditions of their lives. In doing so, she largely leaves behind any kind of national identification, to the extent that such a shedding of national connection is possible. At the same time, she begins to imagine herself as a subject in history, connected in embodied ways with a diverse group of marginalized peoples. When she metaphorically throws her blanket away by the end of the text, she is throwing away her belief in a collective national consciousness as well as in a government that reflects the will of this nationally-defined people:

> My Cheechum used to tell me that when the government gives you something, they take all that you have in return – your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul. When they are sure they have everything, they give you a blanket to cover your shame. She said that the churches, with their talk about

> God, the Devil, heaven and hell, and schools that taught children to be ashamed, were all a part of that government. When I tried to explain to her that our teacher said governments were made by the people, she told me, "It only looks like that from the outside, my girl." She used to say that all our people wore blankets, each in his own way. She said that other people wore them too, not just Halfbreeds and Indians, and as I grew up I would see them and understand. Someday though, people would throw them away and the whole world would change. (157)

By throwing away her blanket, the autobiographical "I" consciously aligns herself with others who have done, or will do, likewise. The collective movement for social change that the autobiographical "I" envisions through Cheechum's words here is one that involves numerous individual transformations, here figured as a kind of physical shedding. While the autobiographical "I" cannot simply leave the nation behind, since colonial discourses of Indianness and a wide range of government practices, discourses, and institutions have shaped her community, she places her allegiance with those she calls her people. What it means to be a part of her people becomes increasingly complex, even contradictory, by the end of the text. The autobiographical "I" is variously figured as a representative or exceptional Métis woman, as part of, or separate from, her community. Moreover, the borders between her Métis community and other Native – and sometimes non-Native – communities become increasingly blurred by the end of the text, partly through the central figure's embodied identification with others beyond her community. Nevertheless, the autobiographical "I" underlines that her allegiance is to her people, however ambiguously defined, however porous the borders of this group prove to be. When national issues enter into questions of autobiographical identity in *Halfbreed*, they do so most often in terms that suggest that Canada is a newcomer and an invader on Métis territory, displacing and disfiguring Métis bodies, decimating Métis and other Native lives and communities. The Canadian government and Native associations are represented as adversaries, pitted against one another, with the government generally seen as an oppressive collection of structures, practices, and institutions. While the autobiographical "I" moves toward seeing herself as a subject in history, including Indian and Canadian history, toward the end of the text, the identity she emphasizes is the one that connects her with her people.

This emphasis on Native communities and communal identities, and the central figure's wariness about a dance of citizenship that largely excludes her and her people, goes unnoticed in a number of critical commentaries on the text. Indeed, one of the blurbs on the opening page of the text appears to proclaim the opposite. In his endorsement of *Halfbreed*, white Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe notes: "Here speaks a voice never heard before with such direct frankness, such humour: the voice of the true Canadian woman" (n.p.). Wiebe's description of the autobiographical "I" as a "true Canadian woman" is ironic, given her increasing opposition to white Canadian structures, discourses, and institutions by the end of the text. While the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* places her allegiance with her people rather than with a nation she sees as largely oppressing her people, the critical accolade that is used to sell the book to a Canadian audience emphasizes the central figure's identity as a Canadian woman.[3] Wiebe's comment both conflicts with and, in some ways, echoes the blurb on the back cover of *Halfbreed*. This two-paragraph summary begins by emphasizing both a Canadian context for Campbell's *Halfbreed* and a kind of remoteness from "Canadian society" that the reader can expect to find in the text: "This extraordinary account, written by a young Métis woman, opens the door to a little-known world that coexists alongside Canadian society" (n.p.). In this description, the Métis and Canadian worlds coexist, but do not seem to mingle. Instead, the impression is that the reader is somehow entering a foreign land, even while she remains securely within the borders of Canada. It is both a Canadian story and not a Canadian story at once, according to this blurb. While Wiebe's comment and the blurb on the back cover seem to conflict with one another – the former says that the autobiographical "I" is Canadian, while the latter suggests that she is not – at another level, the two commentaries agree. The way to read this autobiographical text is to place Canadian identities first. The back blurb particularly underlines the Canadian identity of the reader, both in the passage quoted above and elsewhere: Campbell's story, the blurb suggests, "stands as a challenge to any Canadian who believes in human rights and human dignity" (n.p.). Wiebe's comment emphasizes the Canadian identity of the writer and/or the autobiographical "I." While the autobiographical "I" does not call herself a Canadian, Wiebe suggests that the white Canadian reader can identify in some way with her tale because she makes it humourous, accessible; so "Canadianness" is bestowed upon her through imagining a kind of shared or proximate experience. In both the back blurb and the accolade, the central figure's place or role in (white) society is emphasized. Just as in the Stampede dance, the white reader or observer names the identity of the autobiographical "I." For Wiebe, she is a Canadian. For the back blurb, she is an outsider within Canada. Her account underlines the subjectivity of the Canadian reader who believes in human rights, a reader whose morality is underlined through the reading of this text. Just as in the Stampede dance, the reader's or observer's "place in society" is always already assured. The reader can enter a foreign land, a land that is also Canadian land, safely, either by recognizing the autobiographical "I" as Canadian or by underlining the way her extraordinary story reinforces the morality, and centrality, of the implicitly white reader.

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[3] At least one American edition of the text does not include critical accolades for the book, so Wiebe's comments are particularly directed at Canadian audiences. The American edition I own was printed in 1982 and published in Lincoln by the University of Nebraska Press.

I begin this section by focussing on these promotional blurbs because the emphasis on Canadian identity, underlined in fairly obvious ways here, is repeated elsewhere: in the publisher's editing of the text, in a National Film Board adaptation of Campbell's story, and in critical readings of *Halfbreed*. In this section, I argue that various readings of the text have repeated, however unintentionally, stereotypes of Indian identity that the autobiographical "I" works to challenge in *Halfbreed*: namely, that Native people are somehow generic or interchangeable, that specificities of history and culture do not matter, and that Native people are objects of consumption freely accessible to the white gaze. In many of these readings, these stereotypes are not so much challenged, but rather are rearticulated, often in complex ways, through feminist or postcolonial theories, for example. Second, I argue that the allegiance of the autobiographical "I" to her people, along with the rejection of predominantly white Canadian identities, structures, practices, and institutions, are often obscured in readings of *Halfbreed*. Critical readings of *Halfbreed* often polarize issues of identity, so that the central figure is seen either as a self relatively cut off from other selves, or as a self completely and seamlessly immersed in a clearly defined larger group. Whether this successful self is seen through the lens of liberal humanist, feminist, or postcolonial theories, readings of the text that alternately atomize or collectivize the central figure often erase both the complex issues of embodiment and the conflicted ties to various communities that figure largely in *Halfbreed*. By downplaying the way the central figure's identity is entangled within various overlapping communities, and by emphasizing the narrative of a successful either representative or individual citizen/self, these readings often obscure complex community connections, implicitly underscoring national identities and placing allegiance to nation first. Finally, I look at the ways in which Maria Campbell responds to various readings of her text. In interviews, essays, and other writings, Campbell both anticipates and calls into question problematic readings of her text. Reemphasizing the need to read Native lives in the contexts of

Native communities and community concerns, she challenges narrow visions of self, race, or nation that publishers, critics, and film producers sometimes see reflected in her text. The readings of the text that I examine here are diverse both in terms of form – from editorial changes in the text, to the story-shaping done by film producers, to reviews and critical articles on *Halfbreed* – and in terms of content. They range from early reviews of the text to recent critical articles, so the historical contexts that inform these readings, and the critical theories of identity these readers draw on, also vary greatly. Most often, stereotypes of Indian identity or questions of citizenship are not the primary focus of these readings. Moreover, these readings perform important cultural work in other ways, with later readings often providing important correctives of, or further developments on, earlier readings. While the aims of the readings I look at vary greatly, it is my intention to draw a diverse set of readings together in order to show how dominant notions of Indianness and citizenship continue to thread their way through a predominantly white readership responding to *Halfbreed*. At the same time, I contrast some of these readings with the emphasis on Native community and local and communal identities found in some Native writers' responses to the text. My intent in this section is not so much to critique particular readings of the text as to point out the persistence of the structures that Campbell works hard to critique in *Halfbreed*. Both *Halfbreed* itself and the critics who write about the text participate, to different degrees, in the inequitable structures and practices that Campbell critiques. As Campbell shows she is very much aware, the dance of citizenship continues in various ways, both within the text itself and in many predominantly white readings of *Halfbreed*.

Early Liberal Humanist Readings

In *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, three years after Campbell's *Halfbreed* was published, John Anson Warner writes a rather scathing review of Campbell's text.

Reviewing both Campbell's *Halfbreed* and a now forgotten book by Henry Zentner entitled *The Indian Identity Crisis*, Warner shows he decidedly prefers the latter. The preference is evident not only in terms of his commentary, but also in terms of space: Warner devotes a single paragraph to Campbell, while his analysis of the "small but pithy book" by Zentner takes five paragraphs (259).[4] Although Warner calls Campbell's book "an intensely gripping and personal account of what it is like to be a Metis woman in modern western Canada," in the context of the rest of the review, this praise comes across largely as a way of diminishing the text by relegating it to a female sphere of merely personal or private concerns (259). In contrast with Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Zentner's book, Warner claims, is a "more dispassionate and detached scholarly account of studies relating to modern Indian identity within the Canadian context" (259). For Warner, it is partly Zentner's attention to the Canadian context that gives this book its authority, an authority he finds largely lacking in Campbell's text. In essence, Warner finds the life of the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* completely incomprehensible. He writes: "I personally would have appreciated a more careful discussion from Ms Campbell as to how an ostensibly conservatively raised Metis girl could have found herself so easily in transit to the degradation of West Coast big city life" (259). Here Warner erases the embodied connection of the autobiographical "I" with her community, the social ostracism and grinding poverty faced by her family, and the complexities of Métis identity that Campbell represents in *Halfbreed*. He replaces her complex narrative of conflicting identities and the messiness of embodied social relations represented in *Halfbreed* with a common stereotype of Indian identity: that Native people are individually to blame for any misfortunes that befall them. In so doing, Warner both individualizes the central figure and implicitly generalizes her fate as a willfully wayward body. For Warner, Indian lives are inexplicable; their life narratives are tragic, yet they have only themselves to blame. This stereotype is repeated in his reading of Zentner's *The Indian Identity Crisis*. Here Campbell is implicitly critiqued by virtue of what her book ostensibly lacks: a broader perspective on Indians in Canada, one that explains Indian lives in terms of Canadian values, institutions, and practices, as Zentner apparently does. According to Warner, "Zentner's book deserves to be read as an eloquent, coherent statement about the Indian problem as a whole" (260). Zentner emphasizes the way traits from a "pre-neolithic past" hamper "the Indian," making it difficult for "him" to fit into white society: not surprisingly, these traits stereotypically include a lack of work ethic, an inability to plan for the future, and so on (Warner 259-60). Warner summarizes the stance of Zentner's book as follows: "Zentner's basic feeling is that native peoples should become more equal within the context of Canadian society. As they do move towards equality in economic and political realms, however, they will have to give up much of their persisting traditional culture which makes them different" (260). By balancing "equality and identity," Warner asserts, following Zentner, Indians can contribute to "'a policy of ethnic and cultural pluralism'" (260). Like Trudeau, Warner apparently believes in a multicultural society where Indians can become "Canadians as all other Canadians." This kind of Canadianness involves dropping those aspects of Indian identity that do not fit into modern (white) Canadian life.

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[4] This imbalance is compounded by the fact that the journal "inadvertently assigned" Zentner's book "to two reviewers," according to a note by the book review editor, so that Warner's five paragraphs on Zentner are followed by yet another critical review of the book (Warner 260).

Warner's stereotypical representation of Indians and his focus on an implicitly white Canadianness as the central concern in his review article are clearly problematic. Warner neatly reverses the priorities of Campbell's *Halfbreed*, underlining implicitly white national concerns and identities while erasing the central figure's complex and embodied connections with those she calls her people. I am interested in Warner here primarily because some of his questionable depictions and critical priorities are echoed, in less obvious ways, in far more sophisticated and helpful readings of the text. While Warner's article has few redeeming qualities, I want to turn now to another contemporary review of Campbell's *Halfbreed*, one written by a white reader far more sympathetic to the portrayal of Métis identity in Campbell's text. In his 1974 review of three Native autobiographies, Peter Allen welcomes the publication of these texts, underlining the need for "more books of this kind" that attempt to "render the truth of native experience" (409). While Allen evidently has a great respect for Campbell's *Halfbreed* and for the other two autobiographical accounts he reviews – Jane Willis' *Geneish* and Wilfred Pelletier and Ted Poole's *No Foreign Land* – a respect lacking in Warner's review of Campbell's text, it is interesting to see that Allen's framework for reading these texts is not that different from Warner's. Both Warner and Allen frame the texts they review in terms of Canadian identities and Canadian culture. Allen's review article begins: "Although the subtitle of the third of these works may remind us that a 'Canadian Indian' is something of a contradiction in terms, the native people are a central (if often ignored) fact of Canadian life, and the few accounts we have of their way of life are an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Canadian culture" (406). Allen's framework for reading these texts is both liberal humanist and implicitly multicultural: there are many cultures that contribute to the Canadian mosaic, and here is one cultural group that we need to add to our picture of Canada. For Allen, these texts are valuable in the first instance because they tell us something about Canadian culture. As in the May 1973 issue of *Maclean's* discussed in the previous section, there is a clear line drawn between "us" and "them," with the former referring to white people who collect information, study Native autobiographical accounts and other texts, and from these efforts, construct a picture of Canada. Canadian culture, in other words, still belongs to "us," while a contribution to this culture can be made by "them." Allen's first paragraph ends by noting that the appearance of these three autobiographies "is an entirely welcome event, and not the less so because the outlook they provide on Canadian society is disturbing and painful" (406). Here Allen's depiction of these texts as a moral critique of Canadian society recalls the blurb on the back of Campbell's *Halfbreed*, a blurb that ultimately underlines the morality of the white reader who enters the foreign, but only partly foreign, land of these texts.

One of the strengths of this early review article is that Allen sometimes underlines the importance of the cultural contexts that shape the life of the central figure in *Halfbreed*. Indeed, Allen emphasizes the tremendous gap that separates white literary critics from Native lives at the time of his writing. With few texts by Native people and no Native literary critics to turn to, he works to bridge this gap by mentioning his only Native acquaintance at the end of the article and outlining her reading of the text (409). In a way, then, the article ends on a rather humble note: while I can judge the literary worth of these texts, Allen seems to be saying, I cannot really judge them as "social documents," "a far more difficult matter," because I do not know enough about the culture they spring from (409). While Warner finds the central figure's life in *Halfbreed* simultaneously idiosyncratic, stereotypical, and inexplicable, Allen sees both Willis' and Campbell's stories as immensely believable, unfolding in the context of an inequitable social system (407-08). Allen's comparison of Willis' *Geneish* and Campbell's *Halfbreed* is in some ways insightful, and in other ways problematic in terms of what it says about Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Contrasting these two texts almost the way Warner does, but with Campbell's text playing the role of Zentner's here, Allen claims that Campbell "can see her own story in an historical and cultural perspective that Willis does not pretend to offer" (407). Although Allen emphasizes the situatedness of Campbell's story on the one hand, on the other hand he strips it of its embeddedness in Native communities by lifting the text, so to speak, beyond Nativeness to what he sees as a larger, abstract, implicitly white "humanness." Allen writes: "Although Campbell finds spiritual freedom through her struggle, she herself offers no political or social answers. Her story lies beyond anger and hope and is the greater artistic achievement for moving past autobiographical protest to envision the human meaning of degradation" (408). Here Allen metaphorically strips the narrative away from the bodies and communities represented in *Halfbreed*. He assumes that there is a single "human meaning of degradation," one that transcends the particulars of the central figure's community. Writing in the early 1970s, Allen ultimately works to see the text as a valuable literary document by disengaging the text from its local contexts, a liberal humanist move that both connects Native lives with, and troublingly disconnects them from, an unmarked, implicitly white "humanness" Allen values in this article. By doing so, Allen makes a similar move to the one made in Warner's review article, albeit in less obvious ways: he saves Campbell's text from Indianness by seeing the lives depicted in the text in ostensibly broader "human" terms. Moreover, by distancing Campbell's text from the "bitterness and desire to attack" that he sees in Willis' otherwise moving text (407), Allen reinforces the stereotype of the militant Indian by exempting Campbell from it.[5] So it is through stripping away the "Indianness" of the text, ironically, that Allen sees *Halfbreed* as a document that transcends specificities in order to contribute to "our" (white) picture of Canadian culture.

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[5] In her 1975 book *Defeathering the Indian*, Emma LaRoque summarizes this stereotype as follows: "A more recent image (which is really just an extension of the savage Indian myth) is the militant Indian, the embodiment of Red Power. This is the bitter, angry Indian. He is the Indian who harangues the white man at every opportunity. He is the warrior risen from the dead and he is expected to explode in the very near future" (33). A more recent review by Alfred Fisher likewise repeats this stereotype:

> Reviews often cited the absence of bitterness in Campbell's work, a dimension by no means in short supply in Willis or Pelletier. With a vast international literature of bitterness developed over the past 20 years, Campbell's exceptionality in this regard has become even more outstanding. . . . Bitterness as expression prevails. Bitterness as a condition of life in Native communities remains. *Half-Breed* has stepped out of the exceptionality of its youth to become a book of wisdom in its maturity. (Fisher 322)

Feminist Readings

I want to turn now from these early reviews and promotional blurbs to three later feminist readings of Campbell's *Halfbreed* by Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, Helen Buss, and Maureen Slattery respectively. While these critical readings were published at different times – Bataille and Sands' *American Indian Women* in 1984, Buss' *Mapping Our Selves* in 1993, and Slattery's "Border-Crossings" in 1998 – they are connected by their desire to trace the development of a specifically gendered female self in Campbell's *Halfbreed*. These critics' attention to gender provides an important corrective to androcentric accounts of *Halfbreed* such as Warner's.[6] More generally, Buss' *Mapping Our Selves* contributes to a feminist rethinking of nineteenth-century Canadian women's pioneering accounts. Bataille and Sands' *American Indian Women*, another book-length study, provides a major intervention into emerging, largely androcentric accounts of Native American autobiographies by critics such as Arnold Krupat and H. David Brumble III. However, in their focus on the progress of an individualized self, Bataille and Sands, Buss, and Slattery tend to obscure the community connections, the troubling issues of race and nation, and the complex dynamics of overlapping group identities that Campbell represents in *Halfbreed*. In these readings, gender generally takes priority over race. According to Bataille and Sands, Campbell's "life story is more like those of other contemporary women writers than those of previous Indian writers" (Bataille and Sands 125). The comment can be read as emblematic of the way subtle assumptions about race are entangled with claims about gender in these critical readings, even as issues of race are relatively ignored. For Bataille and Sands,

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[6] Peter Allen does briefly mention gender in his review article. He notes that Poole and Pelletier's *No Foreign Land* "infuriated" his Native acquaintance, largely because she felt that the book obscured the role of women on Native reserves (409). Beyond this comparative comment, however, Allen does not pay much attention to issues of gender in either Campbell's *Halfbreed* or Willis' *Geneish*.

Campbell's text is more sophisticated than the other texts by Native women writers examined in *American Indian Women*. As Bataille and Sands work to connect Campbell's text with those of contemporary (implicitly white) women writers, they simultaneously disconnect it from a Native tradition. This hierarchy of gender over race is more obvious in Bataille and Sands' work, which was published just prior to a relative explosion of critical works on race, than it is in Slattery's or Buss'. However, in all three white feminist readings of *Halfbreed* that I examine here, gender is highlighted not so much in complex interconnection with, but rather to the relative exclusion of, issues of race and nation. By focussing on the development of individual identity in the text, these critics tend to obscure the complex and embodied community connections that Campbell prioritizes in *Halfbreed*. Moreover, these feminist critics implicitly or explicitly fit the text into a narrative of nation that Campbell largely sets out to contest. In the paragraphs that follow, I first look at the earlier reading of *Halfbreed* presented by Bataille and Sands. I then suggest that many of their assumptions about gender, race, individuality, and community carry on into the later, apparently more race-cognizant critical readings by Buss and Slattery.

In *American Indian Women*, Bataille and Sands examine over a dozen autobiographies by North American Indian women, ranging from early twentieth century ethnographic accounts recorded by white male anthropologists to later self-authored accounts such as Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Bataille and Sands' analysis relies on a fairly traditional and conservative notion of autobiography: literary autobiographies involve "a sense of discovery of the wholeness of the subject's identity" (13); the greatest task of autobiography is to capture the essence and truth of a highly unique individual (12, 13, 26, 129). It is by these standards that Bataille and Sands judge the texts they read, and following this criteria, they find many of the earlier accounts lacking. *American Indian Women* thus traces what Bataille and Sands regard as the evolution of American Indian women's writing toward what they see as more sophisticated recent texts, culminating in a full-length chapter on Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*.[7] In tracing this evolution, Bataille and Sands' analysis retains nineteenth-century stereotypes of Indians as childlike, needing to grow in order to enter civilization, in this case the civilized world of literary autobiographies. Echoing anthropologist Truman Michelson's description of Indian women's autobiography as at times "naive" (32), Bataille and Sands argue that Anna Shaw's description of an epidemic is "too simplistic to be convincing," for example, since the autobiographer leaves out cultural details they feel would explain the event in more complex ways (91).[8] Speculating on autobiographical narratives of the future, Bataille and Sands suggest that as Indian women's "experiences and criteria for judgment about life widen [like children's], their narratives are likely to become more consciously evaluative about themselves and their worlds [like adults']. Sophistication and complexity will be heightened" (135). Bataille and Sands' work clearly outlines the allure of North American Indian women's autobiographies that are heavily edited for a predominantly white readership. Where the creative collaboration with the editor is "careful," sometimes even "inspired," they note, "the work admits the nontribal audience into the life and ways of an individual Indian woman within her culture in a mode that is dramatic and stylistically satisfying" (16). In other words, as in the Stampede dance, white people can catch a glimpse of an exotic world, but this glimpse is "satisfying," painless, and non-threatening. The autobiography is delivered in familiar "Western clothing," to borrow a phrase from Brumble, through the careful work of the non-Indian collaborator.[9]

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[7] Although their reading of Campbell's *Halfbreed* is in fact the second last chapter of the book, there is a sense that a new standard has been achieved in the writing of *Halfbreed*. For Bataille and Sands, Campbell's text represents a turning point in writings by North American Indian women. The chapter on *Halfbreed* is the last chapter that discusses any single text at length. The final chapter charts what Bataille and Sands see as future directions for North American Indian women's autobiographies; they analyze a series of texts briefly, spending only a paragraph or two on each text.

[8] Brenda Carr notes that "Bataille and Sands accept Michelson's presentation almost without question, describing [The Fox Indian Woman's] . . . tale as bland, her character as passive. They even rebuke the woman for taking no interest in the contemporary split between progressives and conservatives in the Fox community" (141).

For Bataille and Sands, *Halfbreed* is not so much the representation of a people, or even the representation of a central figure caught in a web of conflicted group identities. It is, rather, the story of an individual, unique, successful female self:

> Maria Campbell's story is that of one individual Indian woman in Canada and, although she generalizes that she is telling "what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman," clearly her story is that of one woman who has struggled to survive the prejudice and poverty in her life. Although one learns a great deal about the life of Halfbreed women in Canada from Campbell's story, it is the individual story of her life that is at the center of the narrative. The dramatic moments, the frustrations, and the fears are clearly hers, and the concern is with her life, not with the larger group of Indian women who might share similar experiences (Bataille and Sands 116).

It is perhaps not surprising that Bataille and Sands focus on the individual success narrative in *Halfbreed*. Writing in the early 1980s, Bataille and Sands draw on an emerging, predominantly white, feminist discourse on autobiography, one that emphasizes the different sense of female selfhood that women's autobiographical writings supposedly share (8-9; cf. Buss 171). However, by disconnecting Campbell's autobiographical narrative both from the Native autobiographical texts that precede it and from the lives of other Indian women, Bataille and Sands obscure the way *Halfbreed* is more than the story of an individual, successful self. Moreover, while they do not focus to a large extent on specifically Canadian identities, they implicitly connect this successful self with a national, in this case American, identity. Indeed, *American Indian Women* silently erases national borders in the interests of establishing a specifically American literary tradition. In the introductory chapter, Bataille and Sands claim that four genres have influenced American Indian women's autobiographies: early American autobiographies that address "typically American issues" (5), captivity narratives by American women such as Mary Rowlandson, spiritual narratives such as those by early Puritans, and American slave narratives (4-6). In Bataille and Sands' terms, these genres are all versions of a kind of American success story, all of them outlining, in different ways, an individual, separate, American self. The introductory chapter that frames the reading of Campbell suggests that a version of this successful American self is found in *Halfbreed*. Ironically, then, Bataille and Sands incorporate Campbell's text as a paradigmatic example of the progress of Indians toward contemporary citizenship, in ways that parallel historical discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada that I outlined in Chapter One. However, the nation they include Campbell in is America, not Canada, so that their reading is doubly colonizing, erasing even the specificities of Canadian national discourses and Canadian social structures that Campbell both engages with and repudiates as an important source of the central figure's identity in *Halfbreed*. In other words, Bataille and Sands include Campbell seamlessly in an American national identity that, one could argue, has little to do with *Halfbreed*, immersed as Campbell is in the local conditions that have produced the life of the autobiographical self, the local conditions out of and into which Maria continually struggles.

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[9] In *American Indian Autobiography*, H. David Brumble III argues that Bataille and Sands' list of criteria for "literary" autobiographies "assumes a Western aesthetic and Western literary conventions," conventions Brumble claims are far removed from the typical forms found in traditional Indian oral autobiographical narratives. For example, the notion that literary autobiographies must be long and comprehensive rules out traditionally shorter oral autobiographies. According to Brumble, "Bataille and Sands are typical, then, of those who want their Indian literature to come to them in Western clothing" (15).

In Helen Buss' *Mapping Our Selves*, the successful female self that Bataille and Sands emphasize is placed in a specifically Canadian framework. According to Bina Freiwald, Buss' book "is important and original in terms of the range of primary texts it examines and the theoretical framework it develops for the analysis of these texts" (back blurb). The primary texts that Buss examines are nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canadian women's autobiographies. While Buss reads over two dozen such texts, she includes only two by non-white women: Cheryl Foggo's *Pourin' Down Rain*, considered very briefly in the second-last paragraph of her book, and Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Her theoretical framework involves two distinct representations of the relationship between reader and text. First, Buss describes her critical relation to the texts she reads as that of a "mother, sister, and daughter" to the texts (25). She reads between the lines, so to speak, to see in each text what women who belong to the same family might be able to see, knowing each other so intimately: she nurtures partly-formed meanings in the text as a mother would, sees parallels and differences as a sister might, and grows as a daughter would through reading her mother's life text (25-27). Second, Buss imagines her critical work and the work of the autobiographical texts she reads as a kind of cartography, a mapping of the self, as the title of her book suggests. Both the range of texts she examines and her framework for reading combine to produce a picture of the autobiographical "I" in Campbell's *Halfbreed* as a woman whose life is marked primarily by issues of gender, whose life story belongs to a tradition of predominantly white Canadian women, and whose successful life narrative can be understood largely in terms of its similarities to other Canadian women's texts. Thus she, like Bataille and Sands, includes Campbell's *Halfbreed* seamlessly in discourses of nation – in this case, a supposedly inclusive feminist revision of nation – without addressing the complex, embodied histories Campbell underlines throughout *Halfbreed*. While Buss points out that Campbell's *Halfbreed* is unlike the other texts she examines because of the author's position "at the bottom of everyone's social scale, that of a Métis," according to Buss, "it is because of the very difference in Campbell's story that the startling similarities between these women's accounts stand out" (139). Buss sees the central figure's tragic story in *Halfbreed* as evolving the way it does largely because of family dynamics; as a child, the autobiographical "I" identifies with her father rather than with her mother, and "[h]er identification with him would seem to be part of the cause of her later abuse of her female self" (138). It may be true that this family dynamic occurs in *Halfbreed*. However, despite Buss' cautionary wording here, this psychological triangle is seen as the major influence on the central figure's life, the only issue developed at any length in her analysis of the text. Underlining the development of a separate female self in *Halfbreed*, Buss suggests that Campbell herself misplaces the emphasis at the end of the text: "Ironically, Campbell sometimes gives credit for her 'conversion' to her identification with a cause (like the spiritual autobiographer in the European tradition, identification with a religion), thus disguising the record of her own growth in womanhood" (144). Buss' careful focus on gender leads her to underestimate the importance of Native solidarity and collective Native identities in the text. The family metaphor Buss uses places the autobiographical "I" in a family of (white) Canadian women and understands her story largely in terms of family dynamics, at times obscuring the complex and conflicted group identities Campbell portrays in *Halfbreed*.

In *Mapping Our Selves*, Buss sees mapping, the second metaphor she uses to describe her reading process, as an endeavor largely devoid of colonial or imperial entanglements. According to Buss, cartography can produce "relief maps so accurate in their scale and subtlety that they can teach the blind the contours of the world" (9). At the same time, she argues that "maps do not lie to us in the way the mirror pretends to be the thing that it reflects. A map does not pretend to reflect the world" (11). Her belief in the relative innocence of mapping elides a complex colonial history in which maps are used as instruments to rename and conquer foreign worlds. As Ashcroft et al. note,

> Both literally and metaphorically, maps and mapping are dominant practices of colonial and post-colonial cultures. Colonization itself is often consequent on a voyage of "discovery," a bringing into being of "undiscovered" lands. The process of discovery is reinforced by the construction of maps, whose existence is a means of textualizing the spatial reality of the other, naming or, in almost all cases, renaming spaces in a symbolic and literal act of mastery and control. (*Key Concepts* 32)

By imagining herself as belonging to the same family as those she writes about, and by imagining a family of Canadian women's texts, Buss draws a map of Campbell's *Halfbreed* that necessarily rewrites some of the priorities and textual emphases in *Halfbreed*. Focussing on the construction of an individual female self, Buss provides a useful picture of gender dynamics in *Halfbreed*. At the same time, this map of selfhood largely imagines the autobiographical "I" as an individual female citizen, claiming her rightful place in nation, growing to maturity both within her own family and implicitly, within a family of other (white) Canadian women writers. In Buss' reading of *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" is influenced primarily by internal family dynamics and by oppressive patriarchal structures. In this psychological mapping of *Halfbreed*, however, the autobiographical "I" is largely unaffected, or at times even is mislead, by collective identities and politics that do not revolve primarily around issues of gender. She implicitly is fit into a feminist version of national inclusiveness, then, through the alignment of her body and her life story with the bodies and life stories of predominantly white Canadian women. Through this relative erasure of embodied differences, the specificities of her community entanglements, her struggles to define herself both in and through her community, are largely erased.

As the title of the article suggests, the emphasis on family dynamics in Buss' reading of *Halfbreed* is echoed in Maureen Slattery's "Border Crossings: Connecting with the Colonized

Mother in Maria Campbell's Life-Writings." Both Slattery and Buss argue that the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* does not connect or identify with her mother in positive ways, and both see this lack of female identification as a major problem in the text. "Campbell's daughter-mother relationship lies like a shadow across *Half-breed*," Slattery writes (140). "Like other women," according to Buss, Campbell "begins with the absent mother - that is, she is culturally impoverished as a female person because the mother is absent, first because of her powerlessness, her lack of supportive female networks, her lack of a female story of her own" (Buss 143). In Buss' reading of *Halfbreed*, racial differences intensify, but do not radically alter, inequities that ultimately derive from patriarchal oppression. Buss generally represents racism and colonialism as stemming from patriarchy: "exploration, trade, warfare, and empire," according to Buss, "have been men's activities" (11; cf. 128). Slattery's article appears in the late 1990s, after the birth of whiteness studies. In Slattery's reading of *Halfbreed*, race and gender seem to be more complexly intertwined than in Buss' mapping of gendered identity. Unlike Buss, Slattery sees the central figure's association with Native movements at the end of the text as an important catalyst for self transformation. Moreover, she notes that gender differences do not affect all women the same way: "Unlike many middle-class white women," Slattery notes, "Campbell was not set free into a world of possibility by the women's movement. . . . [When] she fell out of Metis ways into a white underworld of prostitution and drugs. . . . the liberation movements offered her a road to recovery" (140). To a greater extent than Buss, Slattery underlines the importance of Native movements for social change; she also works to see family dynamics themselves in racialized terms, with race and gender working together to produce identity effects.

The racial dynamics Slattery traces, however, are partly caught up in discourses of Métis identity that erase Métis cultural specificity, in ways reminiscent of debates over the White Paper, by focussing on a white-native struggle. In Slattery's reading, Métis generally means being caught between two worlds, and the Métis ultimately become a symbol of white-native conflicts: "The Metis proudly call themselves the 'in-between' people, associated with their 'historical middle position' between Indians and whites. Metis identity and culture fare best when Metis retain this mediator role" (139). Conflating Campbell with the autobiographical "I" in her writings, Slattery suggests that *Halfbreed* is in a way incomplete, because it is only in the later *Jessica* that Campbell comes to accept her white half. "While *Half-breed* decolonizes her native female legacy," Slattery writes, "*The Book of Jessica* decolonizes her white female heritage" (140). Rather than emphasizing the way the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* inhabits a distinct Métis cultural world, then, Slattery argues that Campbell can only heal herself when she accepts both her nativeness and her whiteness, a whiteness supposedly personified in the figure of her mother. As in Buss' reading, the resolution of Métis identity comes about through Campbell's symbolic immersion into a white female culture, something Slattery suggests happens only in *Jessica*: "Campbell explains that her own mother had frozen herself into a stance of passive suffering before a statue of a Virgin Mary which looked just like Griffiths. She could barely stand her self-recognition as the white-worshipping mother from whom she had emotionally cut off" (Slattery 142). For Slattery, Campbell's connection with the white Griffiths completes an identity that was only partially formed in *Halfbreed*. Through Griffiths, Slattery argues, Campbell finally comes to terms with her white-identified mother. In this reading of Campbell's *Halfbreed*, any closeness between mother and daughter in *Halfbreed* – such as the way the central figure's imagination was "stirred by the stories in Mom's books" (14) – is necessarily deemphasized. Slattery's reading glosses over the fact that Campbell's mother is not white, after all, but Métis, with a mixed cultural heritage that includes some "white" elements, not unlike other Métis people. The insistence that Campbell "met with her own prejudices toward her mother" in her collaboration with Griffiths expresses a kind of white anxiety: having found a troubling portrayal of white hegemony in

Halfbreed, Slattery works to find an acceptable, even positive place for whiteness in *Jessica* (142). For Slattery, only the "common commitments" that Griffiths and Campbell find "as women" can complete Campbell's story (142). Slattery's article works to preserve a binary between *Jessica* and *Halfbreed*, just as it works to preserve a neat division between Campbell's supposedly white and native halves.[10] A white-native conflict is psychologized rather than historicized, with the Métis used as the symbol of a conflict that largely excludes them, even as it writes them in as a symbolic go-between. In this apparently race-cognizant reading, then, Slattery works to find a positive place for whiteness in Campbell's story. In the process, she erases both the cultural specificity and historical complexities of Métis identities and, more generally, the ongoing significance of Native struggles against white hegemony in both *Halfbreed* and *Jessica*. Ironically echoing discourses of Indianness that were dominant in Canada following the failure of the White Paper, then, Slattery problematically implies, however inadvertently, that a white-native conflict can be resolved only when the Native half comes to wholeness by moving into the realm of whiteness. As in Marlatt's *Ghost Works* discussed in the previous chapter, a kind of racial erasure underlies problematic notions of Canadian inclusiveness here.

The three feminist readings examined here provide important correctives to earlier liberal humanist readings of *Halfbreed*. Unlike the review articles by Warner and Allen, these readings underline the importance of gender and are conscious of reading Campbell's *Halfbreed* in politicized ways. To varying degrees, they make use of contemporary theories of gender to try to see the central figure not as a kind of abstract "human," but rather as a gendered self, subject to the complexities of female embodiment. However, partly because of their careful focus on gender, these critics sometimes are less cognizant of issues of race than they might be. With gender as the primary lens through which to view *Halfbreed*, these critics tend to downplay the central figure's embodied connections with her community, with recovering alcoholics, with poor people, or with other marginalized groups. Moreover, the readings by Bataille and Sands, Buss, and Slattery generally underestimate the role of collective Native resistance in Campbell's *Halfbreed*, refiguring the text in terms of gender in ways that sometimes preclude an examination of race or nation. This subtle eliding of race in the construction of a feminized, inclusive national identity is reminiscent of the utopian view of Canadianness Marlatt both constructs and deconstructs, as I show in the previous chapter, in *Ghost Works*. All three white feminist readers of *Halfbreed* place the central figure's identity, in various ways, in gendered and national contexts first, subtly shifting the emphasis from local Métis to gendered Canadian or American identities. In doing so, they construct a kind of feminist version of national inclusiveness, eliding race in subtle ways to produce a solidarity among Canadian (or American) women that ultimately centers on the bodies and lives of white women.

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[10] A 1977 reprint of *Halfbreed* by McClelland and Stewart includes a picture of Campbell on the cover that likewise emphasizes this white/native split. Only one part of Campbell's face can be seen, while the other half is lost in shadows, merging with the picture's black background. The word "halfbreed" is printed parallel to this split down her face, drawing attention to the dividing line between dark and light – a split that is symbolic, presumably, of the author's native and white "halves" respectively.

Postcolonial Readings

This part of my chapter turns to critical readings that use postcolonial theories as a lens through which to read *Halfbreed*. Unlike the feminist critics examined above, Julia V. Emberley, Julie Cairnie, Armando E. Jannetta, and Jodi Lundgren highlight the role cultural hybridity and postcolonial resistance play in the construction of Métis identities.[11] My reading of these critical texts emphasizes important advances made by these scholars as well as some troubling echoes of the "dance of citizenship" that Campbell calls into question in *Halfbreed*. In many cultural contexts, postcolonial theories of hybridity provide sophisticated and powerful tools to analyze the effects of colonial oppression. Moreover, such theories seem particularly suited to studies of Métis identity in *Halfbreed*, given the culturally mixed nature of Métis communities. In their critical readings of *Halfbreed*, Emberley, Cairnie, Jannetta, and Lundgren all argue, in different ways, that the text's resistance to colonialism stems, to a large extent, from the hybrid nature of Métis communities and/or Métis textual practices. Jannetta's "Métis Autobiography," for example, underlines the hybrid nature of Campbell's *Halfbreed*: "Culturally speaking, Métis writers are members of a 'hybrid race.' In mirroring this hybridity, ... Métis narratives are 'halfbreed' stories in every respect and, with their overt political aims, examples of what Barbara Harlow (1986) calls 'resistance literature.' This is especially true of the autobiographical genre employed by Maria Campbell in *Halfbreed*"(170). Likewise, in "Writing and Telling Hybridity," Cairnie argues that Campbell "successfully resists recolonization . . . . because the genre of her text (a hybrid of autobiographical and testimonial narratives) suits the purpose of her text (an exploration of a hybrid identity)" (95). In *Thresholds of Difference*, Emberley borrows Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity to suggest that what appear to be Native stereotypes in Campbell's text – such as descriptions of Métis as active and treaty Indians as passive – are in fact parodic

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[11] In "Border-Crossings," Slattery also employs the discourse of hybridity to a certain extent. She claims to be "enter[ing] the borderland of a Metis woman" in her article, and she talks about the construction of "hybridized identities" for those who live in the "borderland" (139). While the term "hybrid" is borrowed from postcolonial theory here, I would argue that Slattery's

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framework is predominantly feminist rather than postcolonial, as her opening paragraph suggests: she takes the term "borderland" from Sherry Ortner's book *Making Gender*, and she quotes Campbell saying that the play *Jessica* is about "being a woman and the struggle to understand what that meant" (*Jessica* 16; qtd. in Slattery 139). For the critics discussed below, on the other hand, postcolonial theories provide the most important framework for reading. The division of critics into groups is somewhat arbitrary, since Slattery's article includes some postcolonial terms, and Jannetta, Cairnie, Emberley, and Lundgren all draw not just on postcolonial, but also on feminist theories. In calling critics "postcolonial" or "feminist," I wish to convey what I see as their major theoretical engagement in their readings of *Halfbreed*.

subversions of such stereotypes, so dominant white subjectivity is overturned (159-61). According to Lundgren's "'Being a Halfbreed,'" Metis identity is "[h]ybrid by definition" (63), as are Indian women's narratives in general, and this textual and cultural hybridity is what allows for resistance in Campbell's *Halfbreed* (71, 66). While these postcolonial critics locate hybridity in different ways in *Halfbreed*, then, with Emberley emphasizing parodic subversions of identity that destabilize colonial discourses, and Cairnie, Lundgren, and Jannetta underlining both the hybridity of the central figure's community and the hybrid genre of the text, all four critics read *Halfbreed* as a text that engages a kind of postcolonial resistance through its inscription of hybrid, borderline, or mixed identities.

One of the "most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory," hybridity, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (*Key Concepts* 118). In *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin underline that colonialism does not just consist of a one-way process in which oppression totally obliterates the colonized. Instead, "distinctive aspects of the culture of the oppressed . . . become an integral part of the new formations which arise from the clash of cultures characteristic of imperialism" (183). Writings that emphasize the hybridity of postcolonial cultures, they note, contest "ideas of a pure culture of either the post- or pre-colonial" (*Reader* 183). As Ania Loomba and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note, Homi Bhabha's use of the term hybridity has been the most influential in recent postcolonial studies (Loomba 176; *Key Concepts* 118). According to Bhabha's use of the term, resistance to colonial oppression arises from the ways in which the colonial presence itself is "always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" ("Signs" 169). While colonialist authority may wish to see the colonizing culture as whole and originary, it is only when this culture is defined, belatedly, through contrast with the colonized culture, that this wholeness can be imagined. Thus, when postcolonial texts underline the hybridity at the heart of the colonial encounter, notions of an originary colonizing culture are destabilized. In her useful summary of Bhabha's notion of hybridity, Loomba contrasts Bhabha's understanding of the colonizing process with Fanon's: "If in Fanon's writings colonial authority works by inviting black subjects to mimic white culture, in Bhabha's work such an invitation itself undercuts colonial hegemony. Whereas Fanon's black mimics are dislocated subjects, here, as also in a wide range of writings on postcolonialism, mimicry has the effect of undermining authority" (Loomba 178). While Julia Emberley relies on Bhabha explicitly in her reading of *Halfbreed*, to varying degrees, all four postcolonial critics of *Halfbreed* that I examine in this chapter draw on Bhabha's notion of hybrid colonial subjects mimicking dominant discourses, disrupting and destabilizing colonial authority. To varying degrees, all four critics stress that resistance in *Halfbreed* derives from the borderline nature of the text itself and of the Métis community it represents.

There is much that I find useful in postcolonial readings of *Halfbreed*. Indeed, my own reading of the text relies, in part, on an analysis of the ways in which the Métis community depicted in Campbell's *Halfbreed* is a borderline community, one that calls into question the colonizer/colonized binary of white and Indian in post-1969 discourses of Indianness. Disruption of colonial stereotypes, resistance to social oppression of Métis people, and the rise of an opposing struggle for Native autonomy are all central issues in *Halfbreed*, issues that are sometimes ignored in critical readings of the text. With their focus on hybridity and resistance, postcolonial readings of *Halfbreed* by Emberley, Cairnie, Lundgren, and Jannetta all present a significant challenge to readings of the text that elide complex issues of colonial oppression.

At the same time, however, the mixed nature of Métis cultures that makes texts by Métis writers such tantalizing subjects of inquiry for postcolonial critics also presents a danger, one that can be understood in terms suggested by Métis scholar Emma LaRoque. In her 1983 article "The Metis in English Canadian Literature," LaRoque argues that in many white Canadian novels, Métis characters "are not presented as a people or as individuals in their own right," but rather "are used as vehicles to convey the authors' messages," underlining a psychologized, hierarchical contrast between native and white: "The characters are usually steeped in squalor, despair and sexual promiscuity, presumably to symbolize the cultural and contemporary death of the Indian, not even the Metis!" ("Metis" 89). In such writings, in other words, representations of the Métis have little to do with Métis people themselves, since these representations are largely overdetermined by the authors' implicit, if unacknowledged, commitment to hegemonic discourses – in this case, racist discourses of savagery and civilization. While the stereotypes that linger in postcolonial readings of *Halfbreed* are far more subtle than those suggested here, readings of the autobiographical "I" and/or her community that rely on postcolonial discourses of hybridity sometimes repeat a process similar to the one outlined by LaRoque, employing the Métis not as a symbol of the death of the Indian, but rather as a symbol of resistance. Such readings sometimes freeze Métis identities, in other words, by imagining the Métis as paradigmatic examples of resistance to colonial authority, flattening the autobiographical "I" into a kind of quintessential hybrid subject, and collapsing the complex representation of her people into a kind of perfectly resistant, ironically homogenized group. In postcolonial readings of Campbell's text, in other words, "Métis" sometimes becomes, despite the emphasis on cultural heterogeneity and two-way cultural inheritances, a reified symbol of cultural mixing, so that the physical existence of a distinct, embodied, heterogeneous cultural group is overshadowed by the group's symbolic potential. At times, then, the postcolonial readings I examine here ironically repeat, in more sophisticated ways, the cultural stereotyping that LaRoque warns against.

Near the beginning of *Thresholds of Difference*, Julia V. Emberley notes that mainstream white feminism began to come under critique by Native women in Canada during the 1980s (xv). As Emberley observes, Native women challenged the "double blindnesses to racism and ethnocentrism" as well as "the very terms and definitions of gender" on which Anglo-American feminists constructed their theoretical knowledge (xv). Emberley argues that violence among women reinforces colonial and patriarchal relationships among Western men, Western women, and aboriginal women (xix). She represents the problematic relationships among these groups in the form of a mathematical equation, so that white women's subordination of non-white women within the context of Western patriarchy is represented, finally, as the subordination of aboriginal women by Western men, with white women playing the role as mediator – the cancelled term in the pseudo-mathematical equation (xix). It is partly in this context that Emberley reads *Halfbreed*. Through the use of postcolonial theory and Native women's writings, Emberley works to reconstruct critical feminist practices, both to critique current feminist theories and to use a kind of decolonized feminism to counter colonialism. While these are certainly laudable goals, it is arguable that in *Thresholds of Difference*, texts such as *Halfbreed* largely become vehicles to illustrate this postcolonial equation in ways that annex Native Canadian women's writings to a larger postcolonial canon, one that consists largely of resistant "hybrid" writings. Moreover, the fact that one group of people, Native men, are notably absent from Emberley's equation suggests a de-emphasis on the Native communities that so preoccupy Campbell in *Halfbreed*.

Emberley finds a pattern of resistance in the Native women's texts she reads. This pattern is largely determined by the postcolonial theories she brings to the texts, in ways that sometimes belie the dominant structures or preoccupations articulated in and by these texts. According to Emberley, for example, both Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash* and Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* use parodic subversions to construct what Emberley, following Homi Bhabha, calls a "third position" of resistance (136-37, 160). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define Bhabha's Third Space as "the space of hybridity itself, the space in which cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities" (*Key Concepts* 61). Ironically, partly because of Emberley's focus on hybridity and resistance, her readings of *Slash* and *Halfbreed* seem to flatten out the differences between the two texts. While examples of cultural hybridity and parodic subversion may be found in both texts, differences in historical contexts or in the production or distribution of the texts seem rather immaterial in Emberley's reading.[12] In Emberley's reading, complex theories of hybridity are engaged to rescue *Halfbreed* from what Emberley sees as problematic stereotypes in the text (Emberley 159). In the process, however, Emberley explains away a difference between Indians and Métis that the autobiographical "I" sees as important to the understanding of Métis identities. As John Guillory argues, literary canons are generally constructed through "suppressing the context of a cultural work's production and consumption" (43). According to Guillory, this suppression allows critics to connect cultural works with a privileged literary language, thus "assimilating the otherwise dangerous heterodoxies expressed in some works by means of homogenizing methods of textual appropriation" (Guillory 63). Even canonization, as mixed-blood American scholar Kimberly M. Blaeser puts it, can become a way of changing or remaking Native stories (53). The hierarchy of Western theories over Native texts that Emberley seeks to undo is subtly repeated here, both through the homogenization of two Native women's texts as read through the lens of postcolonial theory and through the relative attention she pays to each body of writing: while the bulk of *Thresholds of Difference* engages with the complexities of postcolonial theory, a scant few pages are devoted to each of the few Native women's texts she reads. Although Emberley works to undo colonial discourses and destructive stereotypes, subtle stereotypes persist in her reading of *Halfbreed*, both in the way *Halfbreed* is made to resemble a text by another Native Canadian author, and in the way Emberley uses postcolonial theories to rescue *Halfbreed* from its own apparently inappropriate statements about Métis identities. Emberley provides an important critique of dominant national discourses in the introductory chapter, where she defines "internal colonialism" as the process whereby "indigenous First Nations have been systematically pushed to the oceanic frontiers of the Canadian imaginary to the point of a virtual denial of their existence except as self-serving symbols in the Canadian-history enterprise" (17-18). While this may be an important observation concerning imperial relations in Canada, it is arguable that Emberley herself partly repeats this process not only through representing "the Canadian imaginary" as entirely separate from First Nation imaginings, but also through annexing *Halfbreed* to her own postcolonial version of Canada without paying adequate attention to the embodied lives represented in the text.

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[12] According to Arun Mukherjee, the "privileging of parodic texts" within postcolonial theory "is distorting the field as it focuses on a very limited number of authors, the ones whose texts can give back what the theory is looking for" ("Whose" 7). Extending Mukherjee's argument, I suggest here that Emberley sees hybridity and parody in *Halfbreed* and *Slash* not so much because they are major structural features in these texts, but rather because the postcolonial theories she draws on particularly screen for these highly desirable (in postcolonial terms) attributes.

In "Writing and Telling Hybridity," Julie Cairnie claims that Emberley "introduces an instructive correspondence between the ‘figure of the Mestiza’ and ‘that of the Métis in the Canadian context’" (Emberley 152, qtd. in Cairnie 96-97). Noting that the terms Métis and Mestizo are both "derived from the Latin miscere, meaning ‘to mix,’" Cairnie argues that "Campbell presents hybridity as integral to creativity, and to the transmission and transformation of culture" (97). For Cairnie, both the genre of *Halfbreed* and the Métis identities represented in the text are hybrid. Campbell's *Halfbreed*, she suggests, is part autobiography – a conservative genre in Cairnie's view, one that narrates "a unique or exemplary life" and "rarely agitates for social or political change" – and part testimonio, a revolutionary genre "designed to initiate social and political change" (101). According to Cairnie, then, in *Halfbreed* "testimonial and autobiographical narratives both blend and conflict" (101) to produce a hybrid genre, one that mirrors the hybrid identity portrayed in the text: "Campbell shows differences within her self and among her people. She presents her self, at different points in her life, as hopeful and hopeless, as an exemplary woman and as a poor role model. In *Halfbreed* binary opposition is undermined, as Campbell indicates that there are multiple ways of responding to racism, multiple ways of responding to the apparent defeat of the Northwest Rebellion" (98). In many ways, Cairnie's framework is a useful one, for it provides a way of analyzing both the individual and communal aspects of Campbell's text. Moreover, Cairnie is careful to argue that cultural mixing itself is not necessarily, in and of itself, a revolutionary force: "hybridity is not always a chosen practice or identity," she notes, "but can be (and often is) an imposed marginal position" (96). Cairnie adeptly navigates between the collective and the individual in her article. In contrast with Bataille and Sands, for example, Cairnie sees *Halfbreed* as more than just a narrative of individual survival, the delineation of a unique identity.

Although Cairnie works to balance both the communal and individual narratives in Campbell's *Halfbreed*, at times, her division of the text into what she sees as the component parts of autobiography and testimonio works against a recognition of the ways in which the two narrative strands work together. Cairnie does note that "being unique or exceptional is, somewhat ironically, central to Campbell's challenge of histories, conventions, and expectations" (105). However, this challenge is seen as the part of the text that ultimately aligns *Halfbreed* with reform rather than revolution, autobiography rather than testimonio (105). It is the indulgence in a "life myth," one that ultimately defuses the radical agenda of the testimonial aspects of the text: Campbell presents "no concrete agenda for political change," and she chooses "patient reformation, rather than urgent revolution" (106-107). At some points, in other words, Cairnie's framework of autobiography versus testimonio creates a problematic bifurcation between the personal and the political, so that the text becomes most political only when the autobiographical "I" is portrayed as a kind of representative self. "At key points," Cairnie argues, "Campbell suppresses the social function of her text in favour of its personal function, symptomatic of the tension between the autobiographical narrative and the testimonial narrative" (104). Given this model, it is hard to consider the ways in which the autobiographical "I" can be both individual and a member of a collective *at once*: instead, the revolutionary self is the representative, collective self. For Cairnie, then, "Campbell's reclamation and revision of Halfbreed identity" resides in those textual moments when testimonio is at the forefront, when the text "privileges social over personal identities" (102). In the Stampede dance, the individual dancer mirrors the collective in a supposedly perfect correspondence between individual and group. In an echo of this relationship between self and collective, Cairnie suggests that the autobiographical "I" only reflects the group to the extent that she sheds her autobiographical tendencies. Thus, through her reading of the split between autobiography and testimonio, Cairnie partly subsumes what she sees as the revolutionary self in the text to a collective identity, leaving the embodied autobiographical self, for the most part, outside the realm of collective resistance. Reversing the priorities of Bataille and Sands, in other words, Cairnie points to those aspects of the text that take *Halfbreed* beyond a narrative of individual survival. In the process, however, Cairnie tends to devalue, if only in subtle ways, those parts of the text that deal with embodied identities or with the protagonist's separateness from her people. Thus, both Emberley and Cairnie displace, however unwittingly, the historical, embodied narrative of conflicted identities Campbell so carefully articulates in *Halfbreed*, reducing the text or the central figure to a relatively static figure of resistance. This resistance itself implicitly becomes a new way to see Canada, a new, perhaps more sophisticated form of "multiculturalism" in which resistance is valued. However, this resistance is generally imagined in disembodied or ahistorical ways here. By simply equating resistance with parodic subversion (Emberley) or with testimonio and collective identities (Cairnie), these postcolonial critics elide Campbell's intense focus on the concrete, deeply personal, embodied struggle the central figure undergoes as she struggles to live in the shadow of nation.

Like Cairnie, Jannetta focusses on the hybrid genre of Campbell's *Halfbreed*. However, instead of seeing the text as part testimonio and part autobiography, Jannetta sees autobiography itself as a potentially more radical and collective genre. Noting the way that poststructuralist critics have questioned traditional views of autobiography as the authentic representation of a separate self, Jannetta underlines that in recent autobiography criticism, "[t]he image of the original and imaginative author gives way to the postmodern imitative 'scriptor'" (171). Following Paul Eakin and other recent critics of autobiography, Jannetta focusses on the performative and fictive aspects of autobiography, aspects that Jannetta sees as potentially aligning autobiography both with the more collective and participatory enterprise of traditional Native orature and with a tradition of Native autobiography in which the story of a complete life is not typically told (171-72). The relationship between Métis writing and the genre of autobiography is represented in different ways in Jannetta's reading of Campbell's *Halfbreed*. At some points, Jannetta argues that the two genres are parallel to one another, having undergone similar historical developments: "In literary criticism, Métis writing has until recently been marginalized in much the same way as the autobiographical genre" (172). At other times, Métis writings, and particularly Métis autobiographies, are seen as a potential source of renewal, a way to reinvigorate a critical study of autobiography that is presented as having reached a metaphorical dead-end: "With respect to Maria Campbell, 'the oppositional potential' of autobiography lies first of all in the possibilities of subverting and reinterpreting a literary genre that is, according to deconstructionist theory, 'exhausted'" (172).

This characterization of Métis writings as either parallel to, or forming a subversive part of, the genre of autobiography is somewhat problematic. Recalling dominant multicultural paradigms, Métis writings are partly used as a vehicle here to reinvigorate autobiography studies through injecting a kind of Métis hybridity or difference. "In *Halfbreed*," Jannetta writes, "Maria Campbell seems to create a continuum between oral and written discursive forms, thereby destabilizing clear-cut boundaries and establishing a third space beyond binary oppositions. She recoups (sic!) oral forms such as the 'personal-experience story,'" thus replacing Lyotard's exhausted "grand narrative" with minor literary forms such as anecdotes and folktales (173). While Campbell does employ such literary forms in *Halfbreed*, the Métis "difference" of her text is sometimes represented in Jannetta's article as a kind of local colour, a difference from mainstream autobiography that can inject new life into autobiography studies, setting autobiography off in new directions, with new selves to explore. At the same time, by representing Métis writings and the genre of autobiography as parallel to one another, Jannetta borrows Métis exclusion to confirm the marginal status of autobiography, thus paradoxically upholding the importance and centrality of autobiography studies in a critical climate that sometimes engages in competitive marginalizations.[13] In her efforts to distinguish *Halfbreed* from traditional autobiography, Jannetta usefully underlines the important function of Campbell's text as a means of healing her community, a point I will return to later in the chapter (Jannetta 177; cf. 173, 175). Jannetta also notes that the non-Native reader "who assumes that Campbell's text will offer unlimited insights into Métis culture . . . will only be partly satisfied" (174): just as the text does not capture the entirety of a life, neither does it capture the totality of a people. In this respect, Jannetta challenges readings of the text that see the central figure either as completely mirroring her people or as completely accessible to the white reader. In other ways, however, Jannetta mirrors the problematic multiculturalism suggested by the Stampede dance in *Halfbreed* by using hybrid Métis writings as a means of reinvigorating, and thus ironically reasserting the centrality of, a predominantly non-Native canon of autobiography. The abstract for Jannetta's article makes this national connection explicit: through using such minor forms as the anecdote and the folk tale, according to the abstract, Campbell "subvert[s] with the healing power of humor the 'grand narrative' of official white Canada" (169). Once again, although in far more sophisticated ways than in the readings presented by liberal humanists such as Allen and Warner, the "grand narrative" of Canada is ironically placed at the centre. Métis identities provide a kind of local colour in order to reinvigorate not their own communities, but something tangential to community concerns, whether it be Canadian grand narratives or the genre of autobiography itself.

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[13] In "The Contest of Marginalities," Sylvia Söderlind argues that in a postmodern academy, "marginality has come to replace literariness; as literariness was to the formalist in modernism, so marginality is to the poststructuralist in postmodernism. Marginality is becoming the password for the admission of texts and authors into the curriculum, hence paradoxically into the centre" (100). Moreover, Söderland notes that "[i]f one cannot speak for others yet aspires to the moral shelter of the margin, then proving one's own marginality becomes a paramount concern. And this can only be done by identifying, through metaphor, with a margin already defined" (101). See also Slemon "Climbing" (64).

In more explicit ways than Jannetta or the other postcolonial critics examined here, Jodi Lundgren works to see Campbell's *Halfbreed* in the context of Canadian multiculturalism. While her article only turns to a discussion of multiculturalism in the final paragraphs, this move is not surprising given her emphasis on the importance of "ethnicity" – a key term in Canadian multicultural discourses – in her reading of Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Lundgren begins her article by taking issue with Thomas King's comments on Indianness in *All My Relations*. According to King, a mixed-blood Native writer of Cherokee, Greek, and German descent, "one is either born an Indian or one is not" (King x-xi; qtd. in Lundgren 66). According to King, national identity is transitory, whereas race is not, and "being Native is a matter of race" (ibid.). For Lundgren, King's statements on Indian identity are essentialist, turning race into a biological given rather than a cultural construction. "Discourses of race," she claims, "divide people by suggesting that their differences are genetically entrenched. Cultural syncretism, conversely, emphasizes hybridity, and the Metis identity has always been syncretic" (66). Eschewing discourses of race, then, Lundgren analyzes *Halfbreed* in ways that emphasize ethnicity, something she suggests is "defined by mutable, extrinsic characteristics" and by "learned, culturally patterned behaviours" (62-63). Lundgren usefully notes that Campbell "emphasizes the importance of community-based political action in changing the narrative of her people" (75). Lundgren underlines Campbell's concern with specific communities in *Halfbreed*, something she sees as connected with cultural syncretism, a subversive disruption of chronology, and an emphasis on local difference in the text. However, Lundgren's article ends not with an emphasis on local difference, but rather with ways of reading *Halfbreed* that would incorporate it within a multicultural model of Canada.

Although Lundgren is careful to note that multicultural models have often failed to make any real space for difference, her preference for the term "ethnicity" over "race" at times belies the complexities of racialized embodiment that Campbell explores in *Halfbreed*. It is only in recent years that the term "race" has received increasing attention in multicultural discourses, in order to consider the specific inequities suffered by non-white people in Canada. By employing the term "ethnicity" over "race," Lundgren risks underestimating the multiple and concrete ways in which race matters: the ways in which racialized identities become embodied and cannot simply be put on or taken off at will, the point Thomas King emphasizes in *All My Relations*. Moreover, although it is important to underline the mutability and constructed nature of social relationships, Lundgren risks reshaping the Métis identities Campbell represents in *Halfbreed* into models of cultural mixing that fit only too easily into hegemonic models of multiculturalism.[14] For

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[14] Although published five years before Lundgren's article, King's "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial" could easily be read as a kind of critical rebuttal. According to King, "we need to find

Lundgren, the largest problem faced by the protagonist and her sister in Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* is that they believe in the purity of cultures, with the lighter-skinned April wanting to blend in with the white community she sees as superior, and her darker sister Cheryl mistakenly identifying with, and wanting to recreate, a pure Indian past (Lundgren 64, 74). In contrast, according to Lundgren, Campbell emphasizes cultural syncretism in *Halfbreed* (66). By setting up the texts by Culleton and Campbell as virtual opposites, Lundgren deemphasizes the importance of constructing a sense of Indian culture, seeing Cheryl's quest for identification with her people as simply misguided. Moreover, by claiming that Campbell "certainly does not long for a return to mystical, pre-colonial purity," Lundgren subtly deemphasizes the positive construction of a Métis community in order to read Campbell's text through the lens of current postcolonial theories of resistance, despite the "positive images" of Métis culture Lundgren observes in the text (73, 66). Thus racialized embodiment and community connections take a second place to the reinvigoration of Canadian multicultural discourses through postcolonialism in Lundgren's article, once again reversing the priorities of Campbell's text.

In *The House of Difference*, a recent study of hegemonic constructions of national identity in Canada, Eva Mackey argues that postcolonial theories of hybridity may not always provide the most useful models of cultural resistance in Canada. According to Mackey, in the Canadian context, hybridized identities are often simply reincorporated – in everyday cross-racial interactions, in national celebrations, in local fairs, in museum displays, and in other cultural locations – into a flexible strategy of Canadian nationalism, whereby "multi-identities" come second, and the national project always comes first. Mackey writes: "The colonial tradition of

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descriptors" of Native writing "which do not invoke the cant of progress and which are not joined at the hip with nationalism," as King believes the term "postcolonial" is. "Post-colonial might be an excellent term to use to describe Canadian literature," King argues, "but it will not do to describe Native literature" (14).

constructing cultures was not only a matter of constructing homogeneity, but also a matter of creative and institutionalized cultural hybridity, indicating that the radical potential - and the idea of the *novelty* of these forms - deserves interrogation" (165). According to Mackey, cultural pluralism in Canada "is based on the ability to recognise, utilise, absorb and negotiate differences, and the capacity to construct and manage new forms of identity and subjectivity - of both homogeneous *and* hybrid forms" (166). Mackey's analysis of the way that new, hybridized identities are reincorporated into a flexible strategy of Canadian nationalism undercuts what she calls "the dialectical opposition between repressive homogeneity (the erasure of difference) and revolutionary hybridity" (167). In a chapter entitled "Becoming Indigenous," Mackey examines some recent museum exhibits to illustrate that "even the discourse of ambiguous, conjunctural and hybrid Native identities can be appropriated and transformed by their location within dominant nationalist imaginings," so that native cultures "are mobilised to re-affirm *national* identity" (85). In *Land, Spirit, and Power*, an exhibit curated by aboriginal people, for example, the forward of the catalogue reappropriates the show so that native people contribute to Canada's one hundred twenty-fifth birthday and make a step toward the "openness of spirit" that the director of the museum "hope[s] will characterize the next 125 years" (85). The predominant narrative is still the national one, then, with Native people making valuable contributions to this national project. It could be argued that by emphasizing hybridized identities in *Halfbreed*, postcolonial critics are merely updating stereotypes of Indians rather than presenting a significant challenge to narratives that subsume Native identities, texts, and communities into a larger national (and/or literary critical) agenda. Thus, the important question, Mackey underlines, is not just about "telling it their way" and asking "who shall speak for me?" Rather, Mackey reiterates literary theorist Gayatri Spivak's question: "For me, the question 'Who should speak' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?'" (Spivak *Post-Colonial* 59-60; qtd. in Mackey 84). Moreover, Mackey adds that it is important to think about exactly what this audience hears: "Who is listening? And how?" (84).

The Red Dress

The ironic reinforcement of Indian stereotypes, the eclipsing of local narratives by national ones, and the reduction of complex, embodied communities either to largely disembodied citizen-subjects or to homogeneous, abstract cultural groups, are not confined to critical articles and reviews of *Halfbreed*. Such discourses of Native identities, dis-embodiment, and citizenship, critiqued in Campbell's *Halfbreed* yet sometimes repeated in readings of the text, are also recirculated in a restaging of Campbell's life by the National Film Board of Canada. Shortly after the publication of *Halfbreed*, the National Film Board released a film entitled *The Red Dress*, a fictionalized portrait of a young non-status Indian woman loosely based on Campbell's life. Although Campbell wrote the original script, she was not happy with the film as it finally appeared. According to a later essay by Campbell, in the casting and editing of the film, the story of the young woman portrayed in *The Red Dress* focuses on an individual body in ways that subtly degrade a whole community ("Strategies" 10-11). Moreover, in the material distributed to teachers charged with interpreting the film for students, *The Red Dress* largely becomes a story about the way to fit Indians into a multicultural Canadian society. The film is part of a National Film Board series entitled *Adventures in History*. The inside flap of the information package that includes descriptions of each of the films underlines the national contexts that frame the films: "*Adventures in History* are stories about Canada's past . . . designed to stimulate interest in Canadian history and social studies" (*Adventures* n.p.). The series portrays a positive multicultural vision of Canada, with each film focussing on a separate cultural group, including Indians (*The Red Dress*), Ukrainian immigrants, Hungarian refugees, nineteenth-century fugitive slaves, turn-of-the-century European immigrants, and veterans of the two world wars. Moreover, in the Teacher's Guide to *The Red Dress* included in this package, suggestions for related projects once again underline the Canadian context for the film. The final suggestion reads: "Discuss how you think it might be possible to retain an Indian cultural identity within the context of modern Canadian society. Debate: it would be desireable for all Indians to be assimilated as rapidly and completely as possible into the modern Canadian way of life" (Klein n.p.). The first of three aims of the film, according to the teacher's guide, is "[t]o show the conflict between traditional and modern values in the lives of contemporary Indians" (Klein n.p.). Thus the story of a young non-status Indian woman is placed in the context of a Western narrative of progress, one that confirms that traditional ways are part of a past largely superceded by "modern Canadian society."[15] Moreover, it is up to "Indians" to fit into Canada: there is little discussion of the ways in which Canada must change radically to end the ongoing oppression of Native people.

In "Strategies for Survival," Campbell outlines the myriad problems she faced writing the script for *The Red Dress*, as she struggled to maintain her vision of the story (10-11). According to Campbell, the original script "was a story about clear-cutting in the north and what it does to a community. A producer came along, and wanted me to change it" (10). After she made some changes, compromising in order to get the film produced, the director decided that the film was both "too gentle" and "too political." His very different vision of the film is emphasized in a telling exchange with Campbell: "'But Maria, we've got to have some fucking in here.' I asked him, 'What does fucking have to do with clear-cutting?'" (10). The director's shift away from community issues toward the depiction of what becomes the implied rape of the central figure clearly is not a move toward an exploration of gender issues, but rather represents an exploitation and sensationalization of Campbell's story for marketing purposes. The director's shift from community issues to "fucking," all the more disturbing because of the intended classroom audience for the film, enraged Campbell. When the director called for a rape scene and an incestuous relationship between the father and daughter in the film, Campbell "refused to write it" (10). Of those who auditioned, Campbell notes, "the slimmest, most beautiful girl was chosen. She couldn't act, but she was beautiful" (10). She also wore a sheer dress that "changed the whole story," according to Campbell (11). "It not only degraded her, but it made her community, her whole people, seem like they didn't care about anything" (11). Although Campbell's contract stipulated that she would be an adviser, "nobody listened to me," and on an afternoon when she was absent, "a rape scene was made a part of that film" (11). "If I ever do this again," Campbell decided, "I will have control of the whole production" (11).

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[15] Interestingly, Emberley unwittingly echoes the notion that Native people are somehow frozen in the past by equating contemporary Native cultures with "a gatherer/hunter social formation" (18). As King notes in his introduction to *All My Relations*, Indians can be found in all walks of life, and their narratives might just as easily be about surfing as about hunting and gathering (xv-xvi). For an analysis of the persistence with which Native people are imagined as part of a disappearing past, see LaRoque *Defeathering* (8ff.) and Francis (23). When LaRoque asked school children in the early 1970s what they knew about "the Indians of today," the children confidently provided "the following information: that Indians live in teepees, other Canadians live in houses; Indians use bows and arrows for hunting, others have guns; Indians use horses for transportation, others have cars; Indians use buffalo for food and clothing, others do not; and that Indians wear feathers" (8).

Who is Listening? And How?

In numerous interviews and other writings, Campbell provides a meta-commentary on the production, reception, and recirculation of her life story in its various forms, including the film *The Red Dress*, the play *Jessica*, as well as her autobiography *Halfbreed*, the version of her life story I am most interested in here. In a number of ways, Campbell's statements about her work echo the questions Mackey asks: Who is listening? And how? In a number of locations, Campbell underlines that the audience she is most interested in is her own community, her people. In an interview with Beth Cuthand, for example, Campbell notes: "Really, I'm writing for my community. I sometimes get really frightened when I'm publishing something – not of mainstream but frightened that my own people will be upset, reject me or whatever. But even if they are upset or reject me, I can understand the place they come from" (Campbell "It's the Job" 265). Moreover, she stresses that her work is first and foremost about healing her people – and if another medium will serve her better than writing, she turns to it instead. In an interview with Harmut Lutz, Campbell observes: "I don't think of myself as a writer. My work is in the community. Writing is just one of the tools that I use in my work as an organizer. So it's multimedia kinds of things! I do video, I do film, and I do oral storytelling. I do a lot of teaching. Well, I don't like calling it 'teaching,' it's facilitating. And I work a lot with elders" (Campbell "Interview" 41). Commenting on what she sees as most important in her writing of *Halfbreed*, Campbell underlines the effects on her community: "Through writing *Halfbreed*, I was able to analyze my life and my community, and to analyze the community around me. . . . [My work] has not only served to heal myself and my family, but also to make change in my community and the communities I live in" ("Strategies" 7). "I tried being the militant speaker and activist," Campbell remarks in an interview with Jon Stott; instead of really touching the audience, however, "I was entertaining them; that's really all I was doing. . . . [W]riting was the best way to reach people, because writing is a really personal thing between me and the reader" (Stott 16). In these and other commentaries on her work, Campbell rarely represents herself as a Canadian woman or her writing as working to uphold a particular vision of Canadian identity. Rather, she sees herself as a member of her community, and her work is for her people, both directed toward them as imagined audience and written largely for them in order to heal her community. In other words, both in Campbell's commentaries as well as in *Halfbreed* itself, her people come first, with national concerns playing a distant second. "I don't understand Canadians," "Maria" remarks in a dialogue that precedes the script of the play in *The Book of Jessica*. "I have these really strong feelings about them, but I can't ever say anything, because nobody ever tells me what in the hell, or who in the hell, they are" (*Jessica* 95). In a passage reminiscent of Marlatt, Campbell writes of white people in Canada, "to me they're ghosts because I don't understand where they're coming from" (*Jessica* 96). In this quotation, Canada and Canadians are something "out there," in other words, in some ways affecting, but for the most part apart from, what really concerns Campbell in much of her work: her community, her people.

When Campbell does imagine a non-Native readership for her writings, she is concerned, among other things, about readings that do not consider the importance of the place she comes from, the community she is writing about and from. Asked whether she is concerned about scholars who write literary articles about her work, Campbell notes, "it does bother me, because they don't understand my place or my history, and they are using standards of measurement that are foreign to the place I come from. Someday, I'd like to be reviewed by our own critics and scholars. We do have them - how we are going to convince mainstream of that will be the problem" (Campbell "It's the Job" 269). Like Campbell herself, a number of Native scholars emphasize the importance of community in *Halfbreed*. While both Kateri Damm and Janice Acoose begin their articles on *Halfbreed* with references to nation, for example, they end by stressing community. For Campbell, according to Damm, writing "is a means of recognizing and acknowledging the strength, the beauty, the value and the contributions of Native peoples. It is a means of affirming the cultures, . . . of survival, of moving beyond survival" (113). Similarly, Acoose argues: "[a]s a survivor, [Campbell] leaves an important legacy for other Indigenous women. More importantly, because of Campbell's courageous speaking out, naming her oppressors, and reclaim her self, she lifts the cloak of silence from other Indigenous women who find themselves prisoners in similar situations" (103). Both Damm and Acoose connect the singular and the collective, individual and communal in their articles, seeing the project of individual and community survival and healing as intimately linked. Similarly, Kate Vangen underlines the way that humour is used in *Halfbreed* in ways that ultimately delineate a community. "Much of Indian or Native literature remains 'underground,'" she argues, because the dominant culture is unable to read a kind of humour easily detected by a cultural insider (199). Like Vangen, Acoose, and Damm, LaRoque emphasizes the portrayal of community in Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Her article moves between the individual and community identities portrayed in the text and the larger audience of Native, particularly Métis people with whom, she suggests, the text may well resonate. Ending her article on the Métis in English Canadian literature by contrasting what she sees as the stereotyped portrayal of the Métis in white writers' texts with the portrayal of community in *Halfbreed*, LaRoque emphasizes that the community in *Halfbreed* is one she recognizes as her own:

> I do not read Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* – I experience it. I read that book in one sitting – and I laughed, I loved, I raged. I knew those legends she had heard; I knew the blueberry picking, the dancing. I knew about being so scared of ghosts one couldn't piss in the dark! And I knew about the hardships: the prejudice, the struggle for food, for acceptance, for political recognition. I knew about the people – their humor, their gossipings, their foibles; and their generosity, intelligence, industriousness and finally, their frustrations.
>
> Maria told a story, her story. She did not use the Metis as a vehicle for a worldview, a doctrine or even as social protest. She simply told a story, and because it is authentic, it is my story too. Not in every detail of course, but detail is not the ultimate criteria of authenticity; the mood, the spirit and ethos in *Halfbreed* is what makes it our story. ("The Metis" 91)

With her repetition of the phrase "I knew. . ." and her naming *Halfbreed* "our story" at the end of this passage, LaRoque emphasizes an embodied community of Métis readers like the one imagined by Campbell. Moreover, Native writers Daniel David Moses and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias recognize the contribution *Halfbreed* made to a Native *writing* community by hailing Campbell as "the Mother of us all," the one who enabled other Native writers to follow in her footsteps and write (Lutz 41, 83; cf. 167).

While Campbell herself and Native critics such as LaRoque and Vangen emphasize the importance of community in their readings of Campbell's life story, it would be a mistake to assume that non-Native readers can simply know or understand this community through reading Campbell's text – as the blurb introducing the excerpt from *Halfbreed* in *Maclean's* might suggest. Indeed, in *How Should I Read These?*, white critic Helen Hoy wonders whether non-Native readings of Native texts necessarily "do epistemological and cultural violence to them" (48), and she points out instances of such cultural violence throughout her book (eg., 51, 83, 97). As Hoy underlines, "Too-easy identification by the non-Native reader, ignorance of historical or cultural allusion, obliviousness to the presence or properties of Native genres, and the application of irrelevant aesthetic standards are all means of domesticating difference, assimilating Native narratives into the mainstream" (9).[16] In her introduction to Murray Dobbins' *The One-and-a-Half Men*, Campbell underlines that she found it enormously hard to write this introduction, even for a white man she considered a friend, because, as she finally realized, "I did not want Murray to write about my heroes. It was none of his business. My people had already been hurt enough by the writings of white historians" (Campbell "Introduction" 13-14). As she read Dobbin's manuscript, she "felt many things. Some things were wonderful, others hurt like hell" (13). Yet she writes the introduction nevertheless, continuing a process of engagement with, and critique of, white portrayals of her community, just as she does in *Halfbreed* itself, in interviews, in essays, and in other writings. Even while she writes about and for her community, then, Campbell recognizes that something like the Stampede dance continues to take place, as versions of her life story and the story of her community circulate and re-circulate in the autobiographical texts she has written, in reviews and critical articles, in the editing and directing of different versions of her life story, and in her own responses to these various life texts. Campbell's priorities are clear: her writing, her teaching, and her other work are aimed at trying to heal her community. While Campbell emphasizes her community both within *Halfbreed* itself and in her commentaries on it, she also recognizes the ways in which her story, and that of her community, continue to be shaped by discourses of Indianness as well as by discourses of Canadian identity. Like *The Red Dress*, *Halfbreed* was subject to a number of revisions before it was finally published. According to Barbara Godard, at the July 1983 Women and Words Conference in Vancouver, "Maria Campbell related how, at the insistence of a non-Indian editor, over three hundred pages of the manuscript of *Halfbreed* were thrown out since it was the 'kind of material most people are not interested in'" (Godard 89). Referring to the same incident, Shirley Neuman notes that this phrase "implies that the manuscript was tailored to foreground (and therefore, to some extent, to sensationalize) the story of prostitution and addiction that the editor felt would most interest a non-Métis audience" (Neuman 351). The original manuscript was "2000 pages," and Campbell herself edited out material "about the spirits, Bear, Crow," material that was later brought into *Jessica* (Campbell, "You Have" 45, 52). Much of the shaping of *Halfbreed*, in other words, echoes stereotypes that circulate elsewhere, most obviously in critical readings such as Warren's, more subtly in feminist and post-colonial approaches to the text.

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[16] White critics Helen Hoy and Jeanne Perreault carefully examine difficult issues of whiteness in readings of Campbell's work. Their readings focus not on *Halfbreed*, however, but on *Jessica*. Among other things, what facilitates this work is that *Jessica* includes transcripts of conversations between Campbell and the white actress Linda Griffiths, who played the title role in the play based on Campbell's life, in ways that foreground complex issues of whiteness, racialization, and cultural appropriation. In her chapter on *Jessica* in *How Should I Read These?*, Hoy underlines the importance of listening differently when she argues that through Campbell's voice and presence in the text, *Jessica* "both rebuffs imperialist practices – 'Don't do it,' she warns Griffiths (29) – and affirms alternatives – 'How about that, she finally heard me'" (30) (Hoy 63). For other readings of *Jessica*, see Chester and Dudoward, Egan, and Murray.

Notably, at least one editorial change in *Halfbreed* explicitly involved both the protection of a positive Canadian identity and, unlike *The Red Dress*, the likely excision of a violent bodily experience. In an interview with Lutz, Campbell notes that "a whole section was taken out of the book that was really important, and I had insisted it stay there. And that was something incriminating the RCMP" (42). According to Campbell, the publisher removed the section without her knowledge:

> It was in the galley proofs. And when the book came, it was gone.
>
> It was the 100th anniversary of the RCMP that year. . . . [The publisher] felt that, if there was a law suit, they wouldn't be able to substantiate it. So they went ahead and took it out.
>
> That whole section makes all of the other stuff make sense. And you can almost tell at what point it was pulled out. Because there is a gap. (42)

While Campbell does not specify what was removed from the text, it is likely that it involves Maria's rape by an RCMP officer, an incident that is included in *Jessica*. In *Halfbreed*, the autobiographical "I" leads the RCMP officer to her father's stash of illegally hunted meat simply because he gives her a chocolate bar: an unlikely scenario, since she is well aware both of the power of the RCMP and of her family's precarious financial position (*Halfbreed* 60). By talking about this gap in the interview with Lutz and by reincorporating this incriminating scene through Griffith's recreation of it in *The Book of Jessica* (46), Campbell underlines the terrible conflict between a positive vision of Canada and the wellbeing of her people. She insists on naming the bodily experience excised from her story, even while she refuses the reader access to the particulars of this and other harrowing experiences (eg., *Halfbreed* 139). In the transcripts of conversations included in *The Book of Jessica*, Maria argues with Linda about the appropriateness of including particular scenes, since the focus, for Maria, is always on healing: "We've had this argument before," Maria says to Linda. "Healing – and for me that's theatre, writing – is that you try to find . . . you find what's beautiful, the essence, and that's what you give back. You know what I mean? That's community work. Some of those scenes in *Jessica* make my hair stand up on end. I don't understand why we have to be so explicit" (69). Continually revising the scene, Campbell points to the framing of her life, her body, and her community, and to the ways in which her people also continually move beyond dominant imaginings.

In numerous non-Native readings of Campbell's *Halfbreed*, literary critics, editors, journalists, film producers, and other readers work to include the autobiographical "I" seamlessly in discourses of national belonging. As Rudy Wiebe puts it in the promotional blurb included in *Halfbreed*, "Here speaks . . . the voice of the true Canadian woman." Although not always as explicit as Wiebe, many non-Native readers emphasize narratives of nation over narratives of community, reversing the apparent priorities of Campbell's text. Often left out of such accounts are the complex bodily experiences that paradoxically connect the autobiographical "I" with, and simultaneously disassociate her from, her community. Such visceral experiences – at turns tragic, funny, painful, or joyous – are what LaRoque apparently recognizes as part of a shared history in her reading of *Halfbreed*. As the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed* nests her identity, in complex and conflicted ways, in what she calls "my people," she distances herself, to the extent that she is able to do so, from Canadian discourses and institutions that largely serve to divide Native people from one another. At times, critical readings disconcertingly echo the dance of citizenship portrayed in *Halfbreed* by reincorporating the central figure's body seamlessly in inclusive narratives of nation. However, Campbell contests such readings in a number of ways, through her portrayal of the Stampede dance itself, through her attention to the ways in which her own life story has been continually reshaped, and through her focus on the Métis bodies that are both necessary for, and continually elided by, discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada. By writing back to non-Native publishers, critics, reviewers, editors, and other readers of *Halfbreed*, Campbell continues the community work that so occupies her in *Halfbreed*. Unlike the texts by Chong and Marlatt, Campbell's *Halfbreed* is an autobiography that works to pull away from a nationalist frame. This frame repeatedly reasserts itself both within the text and also in critical readings of *Halfbreed*. Indeed, the Métis community represented in *Halfbreed* is itself partly constructed through discourses of Indianness that purport to provide "Indians" with a place in nation. However, Campbell continually underlines the importance of attending to complex, embodied histories, to the Métis bodies that are elided, for example, when the racist teacher in *Halfbreed* sings "Oh Canada." In *Halfbreed*, the identity of the autobiographical "I" is nested not so much in discourses of Canadianness that purport to include, but rather in the community she calls "my people." Although the process of connecting with her people is never easy nor complete, Campbell's representation of this process and her emphasis on building local communities serve to complicate too-easy discourses of national inclusiveness. Both in *Halfbreed* and in her other writings, Campbell shows that embodied social relations must change. For this to happen, teachers, journalists, social analysts, literary scholars, and others must attend carefully to the ways in which we live and interact as bodies. As I emphasize in the concluding chapter, a different kind of listening is necessary if critics are to hear the complexities of embodiment and the urgent call for social change represented in Campbell's *Halfbreed*.

CONCLUSION

Listening Differently

> We're all learning to be free, and the only way to do that is to see the ways in which we're enslaved.
>
> Larry Rosenberg, "Beyond Letting Go" (166)

> [C]ultural domination is not a static unalterable thing; it is rather a *process*, one always being contested, always having to be renewed. . . . Arguably an oppositional criticism will always be deficient, always liable to despairing collapse, if it underestimates the extent, strategies and flexible complexity of domination. . . . [I]f we feel . . . the need to disclose the effectiveness and complexity of the ideological process of containment, this by no means implies a fatalistic acceptance that it is somehow inevitable and that all opposition is hopeless. On the contrary the very desire to disclose that process is itself oppositional and motivated by the knowledge that, formidable though it be, it is a process which is historically contingent and partial – never necessary or total. It did not, and still does not, have to be so.
>
> Jonathan Dollimore "Introduction" (14-15)

The main project of this dissertation has been to show how embodiment matters in autobiographical constructions of identity produced in the context of a national frame. Since at least the early 1970s, when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau officially made multiculturalism a central feature of Canadian identity, many Canadians ostensibly have found a place in nation through dominant discourses, public policies, and institutions that declare Canada to be an inclusive nation. At the beginning of a new millennium, it seems evident that we have come a long way since the deliberately exclusive practices and policies of earlier times. The Head Tax demanded of Chinese immigrants from 1885 onward, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, the Indian Act of 1951, the controversial 1969 White Paper, and other discriminatory policies and practices have been contested, highly criticized, or repealed. The official face of Canada is no longer exclusively white. Indeed, dominant discourses of inclusiveness underline that multiculturalism is not simply an empirical fact, but rather one of the country's greatest assets. Numerous stories of Canadian settlement, featuring hardy pioneers, noble Indians, or thankful refugees, often imply that we are here because of the sacrifices of our ancestors, that we have earned a place here through their efforts, and that we now live in a better world. However, the contrast between a harsh past and a benevolent present, central to many of the dreams of multiculturalism, glosses over some difficult questions about inclusiveness in Canada today. Caught up in a myth of progress, this narrative trajectory assumes that the story of Canadian identity, and the identities of Canadians, can be traced in terms of an ever-increasing tolerance of diversity and a generous embracing of differences. It assumes that settling in Canada somehow comes with finding a comfortable place here, as though physical location somehow assured acceptance or inclusion. And it passes silently over the raced, colonial, and gendered terrain our ancestors lived on – that we continue to live on. While we often tell ourselves such stories in Canada, it is easy to overlook the ways in which the past continues into the present. As I write this conclusion, numerous Canadians are distancing themselves from "dangerous" Chinatowns, potentially rife with disease in the popular imagination.[1] Young male Arabs and Muslims are routinely viewed with suspicion as potential terrorists at airports across the country, racial profiling is seriously debated as a legitimate means of screening air travellers, and many Canadians now view national security as taking precedence over human rights, as though the former could exist without the latter.[2] Particularly in a post-September 11 world, in the context of a nebulous war on terrorism that threatens to engulf Canada and other countries increasingly in global and local acts of violence, it is urgent to understand the ways in which we may not have come as far as we may have thought.

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[1] Following the news that four new suspected cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) were discovered in Toronto shortly after the city was declared SARS-free by the World Health Organization, "Chinatown districts downtown, in the city's east end and north were abandoned by shoppers and diners, too afraid they might catch the potentially fatal virus from someone who had travelled to Asia" (Moore A2). This despite the fact that SARS infections were not widespread in the community, but rather confined largely to those in contact with hospitals.

One of the ways to think about the gap between a pervasive rhetoric of Canadian inclusiveness and the effects of such discourses on actual lives is through the study of

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In the wake of the SARS epidemic, stereotypes about the Chinese are being recirculated. According to a front page article in *The Globe and Mail*, the Chinese Canadian woman whose family became the first in Canada to be infected by SARS noted: "People treat us like monsters. They say we eat like rats and live like pigs" (Wong A1). "‘Chinese, go away,’" some of her children's classmates taunted, not because the family had been pinpointed as the source of the disease - the school had kept the family's identity confidential - but "merely for the way they look" (Wong A1+).

[2] On June 3, 2002, *The Globe and Mail* ran an article by John Ibbitson entitled "Why Racial Profiling is a Good Idea." According to Ibbitson, a regular columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, we need to let "our security establishment" "get on with the job" of protecting Canadians from terrorists who "act[ ] in the name of Islam" and whose "barbarity" has "no limit. . . .If part of that job means scrutinizing a young Middle Eastern male with strange travel patterns more closely than a middle-aged Danish woman who has been to the same countries, so be it" (A15). While one reader protested Ibbitson's article in a letter to the editor the following day (Yeung-Seu A16), the fact that *The Globe and Mail* ran such an article suggests a hostile climate for anyone associated with "terrorism" through the colour of their skin, the company they keep, their manner of dress, the religious symbols they wear, and so on. As Alanna Mitchell reported on September 21, 2001, in a column entitled "Tide of Hate Crimes Rising in Canada," "Overnight, Canada has changed from a country of easy tolerance to a place where people who look dark-skinned are the targets of insults, threats, and even physical attack, groups representing Muslims, Arabs, Sikhs and Hindus say" (A5). As John Asfour, president of the Canadian Arab Federation, put it, "‘That tolerance we pride ourselves on maybe was never there’" (qtd. in Mitchell A5). For an analysis of the retrenchment of civil rights associated with Bill C-36, the so-called anti-terrorism legislation, and Bill C-35, legislation that protects visiting foreign officials (including repressive leaders) from Canadian protesters, see Carter; Clinchy; Galati; "Impact"; Makin; Sanders; Valpy "Burn"; Valpy "Security Bill"; and "Why."

autobiography. Autobiographical texts do not simply reflect a world from which they are somehow cut off, nor do they faithfully represent the truth of a person's life. There are always gaps and elisions between experience and representation, self and non-self, texts and contexts, with all of these constructed through complex social forces and networks of power that both pervade and extend beyond the realm of the private self. At the same time, as Paul John Eakin has shown, readers read autobiography with the expectation that the text touches the world in some way. Both fictional and referential at once, autobiographical texts are contradictory sites where a complex range of social forces contest one another in the work of constructing socially meaningful or decipherable narratives of identity, where dominant social identities are both reinforced and potentially contested. In all three autobiographies examined here, the autobiographical "I" struggles to negotiate a complex terrain where dominant discourses of inclusiveness collide with the messiness of embodied experience. Tracing the effects of such discourses on their own lives and on the lives of members of their respective communities, they repeatedly show how embodiment matters, how bodies both speak and contest the social codes that write them. As Susanna Egan has noted, in autobiography "[n]ot only the hand that writes but also the body that needs, wants, hurts, inherits, disgusts, and so on, 'figures' in the text" (7). The bodies that figure in Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, and Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* present a different, far more complex story than the one celebrated in and by discourses of national inclusiveness in Canada.

In the first chapter, I looked at a text that ostensibly celebrates a multicultural vision of Canada. As in dominant multicultural discourses, Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* moves from a narrative of past exclusion to one of present inclusion, at least following one narrative thread in the text. Chong's autobiography articulates a dilemma: how can a grandmother reviled in family stories be valued as a worthy ancestor, as a strong woman with her own needs, fears, desires, and dreams, without negating the painful stories of childhood abuse told by the autobiographical narrator's mother? In this text, it may appear that discourses of multiculturalism come to the rescue, restoring family pride by translating a family history of shame and defeat into a narrative of personal and collective triumph. Chong narrates how her impoverished grandparents faced a hostile and racist community, and how her grandmother in particular struggled to find a respected place within a patriarchal Chinese family. Significantly, Chong sometimes suggests that such inequalities are largely a thing of the past, at least in the modern multicultural nation that her branch of the family now firmly calls home. However, if we follow the ways in which particular bodies are represented in this text as both sources of perceived cultural truths and bearers of certain kinds of knowledges, the bodily traces tell a different story. In order to fit the text into a dominant multicultural paradigm, the reader would have to ignore the ways in which May-ying's body becomes an ambivalent signifier, a sign of both Chineseness and non-Chineseness, in order for her to be considered a worthy ancestor and a successful Canadian pioneer. In *The Concubine's Children*, May-ying represents a kind of turning point in a difficult family history, and her triumphant symbolic move from Chinese to Canadian, represented in and through her body, can never be entirely complete. She is needed as a signifier of Chineseness as well, the Chineseness that Denise's mother rejects in bodily ways that range from loathing her mother's frail body to cooking lasagna, pound cake, and apple pie for her own family. Discourses of multiculturalism cannot account for the painful bodily experiences and bodily expulsions represented in this text: the doubleness of May-ying's body and the simultaneous rejection and acceptance of it by her daughter and granddaughter, for example. In its work to recast a painful history in triumphant terms, and in the bodily gaps and silences necessary for this narrative of multicultural progress, *The Concubine's Children* both contests and reinscribes dominant multicultural discourses. My reading of this text shows that Canada has a long way to go in order to dismantle stereotypes of

Chineseness, to incorporate "Chinese" in some way in inclusive notions of Canada, and to imagine different kinds of ancestors as valuable and important, complexly embodied, embedded in inequitable social histories that continue to shape our lives today.

In the second chapter, I examined an autobiographical text that investigates a family history quite different from the one explored in Chong's text. Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works* investigates a slippage between notions of what it means to be Canadian, British, and American, with the latter two identities often seen as foils for Canadian identity. For Marlatt, Canada becomes a place where a white colonial past can be forgotten in a move to a new land seemingly untouched by the inequities she sees so clearly elsewhere. From the British settlers in Malaysia who order servants about, eat canned European foods, and refuse to let their feet touch the soil, to the American tourists who colonize Mexico with their imperialist and fundamentalist Christian gaze, to her own relatives in England who need to maintain a distance from their own Anglo-Indian past, it appears to the autobiographical "she/i" that white folks – always others, always elsewhere – maintain a hierarchy that promises to disappear on Canadian soil. As in Chong's text, Canada is sometimes posited in Marlatt's *Ghost Works* as a land of freedom from racial hierarchies, outdated patriarchal codes, and colonialist oppression. Watching her son, the central autobiographical figure dances an ecstatic dance at the end of the text, one connected with a move to Canada and freedom. However, as in Chong's text, there are other narrative trajectories that contradict this optimistic ending. Many of the contradictions between Canada as a land of freedom or white Canadians as somehow less oppressive than other white folks, and Canada as a place that bleeds into other places and cannot be kept separate from larger global inequities, are evident through a complex play of ghostly bodies in the text. In *Ghost Works*, embodied echoes from earlier times and places are continually at play, or at work, in the present, and the present moment of Canadian freedom is perhaps not as free from colonialism as the autobiographical "she/i" would like to believe. While this hope for a more equal space and more equal relations among people is important, this utopian desire must be measured against what it sometimes obscures: not only the ongoing inequities that are brought into Canada from elsewhere, but also those that begin on Canadian soil, as Maria Campbell is at pains to illustrate in *Halfbreed*.

While Chong and Marlatt sometimes imagine Canada as a space of equality and freedom, and Canadianness as a kind of belonging that can somehow improve lives by leveling hierarchies apparent elsewhere, such is not the case in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Indeed, in Campbell's autobiography, Canada is often represented as an invader or an intruder on lands that belong to those Campbell refers to as "my people." For the autobiographical "I" in *Halfbreed*, "dancing for a place in society" necessitates incorporating or embodying various dominant ideas of Indianness in order to carve out a space for herself at the margins, however painful such a place might be. This dance, the continual work of finding a place in the dominant culture, largely negates the possibility of connecting with her community: the dance only replays a stereotypical notion of Indianness, cut off from various Native lives, bodies, and histories. At the same time, the dance of citizenship cannot be entirely avoided in *Halfbreed*, since Campbell shows how her people not only have continually negotiated with the larger culture, but also have been partly defined by it. What it means to be Métis can only be understood historically, with divisions among Native peoples often carved out arbitrarily, with the interests of the dominant white culture in mind. Campbell suggests that her people have been marginalized not only by numerous white folks who work to strip away the self-confidence and autonomy of her people, but also by dominant discourses of Indianness that imagine a decisive white-Native split, one that cannot acknowledge the presence of Métis bodies in Canada. Instead of searching for a comfortable place in the dominant society, then, the autobiographical "I" turns toward her people by the end of the text, despite the pain associated with the term "Halfbreed." It is a move that necessarily takes place both within and ~~outside~~ notions of Canadianness, for Canada is a place where she can never sit comfortably, neither making a claim to be Canadian nor accepting a position that places her body radically outside nation. Despite differences in historical contexts and methodologies over thirty years of literary criticism, a common thread often emerges in much of the scholarly literature on *Halfbreed*: an attempt to imagine Campbell as an exemplary Canadian and the text as a prototypically Canadian text, despite the difficulties with nation and with discourses of national inclusiveness Campbell underlines in the text. When critics read the central figure's body as quintessentially Canadian, then, they ironically use *Halfbreed* to buttress an inclusive view of nation, a dominant discourse that the text largely contests.

When I attended the conference "Canada: Global Model for a Multicultural State" in September 2002, I wondered whether it would prove that my concerns about national inclusiveness were dated.[3] It is possible, I told myself, that we have progressed further than I have imagined. Perhaps current research in the wide variety of fields represented at the conference would suggest that we have come a long way since 1994, when Chong's *The Concubine's Children* was published. Maybe, I told myself en route to the conference, I am not giving discourses of national inclusiveness a fair hearing after all. However, my experiences at the conference underlined for me the pressing need to find ways that Canadians can talk to and think about one another as embodied, historically situated beings, without eliding the ongoing social histories and complex networks of power that frame our everyday lives. Designed to promote the idea of Canada as a space of acceptance and belonging, the conference ironically mimicked both the promise and the pitfalls of the larger multicultural discourses it simultaneously praised and participated in. Thus the First Nations speakers were placed in a small room with apparently paper-thin walls, making it difficult to hear one another; when they requested a room change, according to one workshop moderator, they were turned down. In the session I attended, speakers and audience huddled close together to hear one another, while the voice of the panelist from the larger session next door reverberated through the room. Workshop themes ranged from education, community activism, and immigration to visible minorities, health, bilingualism, and other topics, all of which seemed important to ongoing discussions of multiculturalism. However, conference participants were asked to choose a stream and stay in it for the duration of the conference, subtly discouraging participants with different experiences from engaging with, confronting, or challenging one another. The written summary of workshops presented to participants after each day's events was an innovative addition to the conference that might have encouraged dialogue across the different streams. Unfortunately, few of the diverse voices and genuine concerns I heard at various workshops were represented in these pages. When an all-male panel summarized the conference in the final plenary session, one woman challenged the ongoing inattention to gender issues at the conference in a passionate speech during question period. She and other audience members were told that the organizers had tried to find qualified women to speak, but few could be found; women get a voice because they can ask questions, one conference organizer assured us. The conventional conference structure, with distinguished panelists at the front and audience members queuing up behind microphones to ask questions, reinforced the point that some voices were more important than others – a structure, incidentally, that the First Nations stream worked to undermine by drawing chairs together in a circle, limiting talks to a very short period, and allowing each audience member to speak in turn. At plenary sessions, only those at the front of the room found their voices, their bodies, continually legitimated, their faces projected on live video to outlying rooms on huge television screens. En route home, as I cycled past those living on the streets of downtown Edmonton, I was strongly reminded that the reasonably hefty conference fees excluded many voices from the start. If the youths from Sioux Lookout had come to the conference only with great difficulty, as I learned at one workshop, many others had not made it at all.

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[3] The conference, organized by the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation, was held in Edmonton, Alberta on September 25-28, 2002.

These experiences all underline for me the pressing need to find ways of imagining and enacting our relationships with one another beyond the wishful thinking of Canada as a space of acceptance, inclusiveness, and belonging. We need to find ways to transform our relationships with one another, to acknowledge the hierarchies so often elided in dominant discourses of national inclusiveness, even as we struggle to transform oppressive discourses, institutions, and social relations. Dominant discourses of national inclusiveness sometimes belie the messiness and complexity of our everyday lives, relationships, and embodied interactions with one another. In order to attend to the troubled relationship between ideals of inclusiveness and the complex working out of such discourses in everyday lives, this dissertation examines representations of embodied experiences in three Canadian women's autobiographies. These representations, themselves embedded in specific historical relations and conflicting discourses of self, embodiment, and nation, suggest that ways of living in or as bodies often radically conflict with dominant ideas of Canada as an inclusive nation. The ironic moments of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, the inequities that were glossed over even as they were enacted in bodily ways, and the telling silences in official representations of workshops at the multiculturalism conference thus reflect some of the larger problems that this dissertation works to investigate at length. Discourses of national inclusion often elide the complex, historically changing ways in which we live and interact as bodies. As key sites where historically specific ideas of gender, race, class, and colonialism are played out and reenacted, as sites where various networks of power and knowledge clash with one another, are contested and reiterated, bodies are crucial to understanding the ways in which oppressive social systems are both perpetuated and changed. Tracing the various ways in which bodies speak in three autobiographical texts, this dissertation examines how difficult it can be for some people in Canada to grow up, live, work, love, or struggle in the shadow of nation.

As I noted in the introductory chapter, one model of Canada put forward by white Canadian literary critic Helen Hoy is that Canada could be considered a failed conversation. Juxtaposing two sound bites from her interviews with CBC television, she imagines Canada in much less optimistic terms than the final program would allow:

> "Canada is a conversation."
>
> "I'm sorry, I wasn't listening." (Hoy 10)

The title of this conclusion is "listening differently." In the next few pages, I want to think about what it might mean for us to listen differently to a range of autobiographical narratives of embodiment. My readings of the autobiographies in this study have shown how important it is to listen to what bodies have to say about the social codes that write them. Traces of embodiment in these texts show how dominant discourses of inclusiveness cannot account for numerous bodily experiences represented, repressed, or sometimes displaced - from the ghostly bodies in *Ghost Works* to the embodied experiences displaced onto relatives in *The Concubine's Children* to the absent Métis bodies in *Halfbreed*. What would happen if we started listening to a range of messy bodily experiences that do not fit easily into dominant discourses of gender, race, or nation? What might such listening entail? How might such listening begin to contest the exclusive effects of dominant discourses of national inclusion?

At this point in a concluding chapter, readers sometimes expect a definitive solution to key problems that have been posed throughout the larger work, or at the very least, some nugget of truth that they can take home with them, after such a long scholarly journey. However, what I have repeatedly found in my readings of these autobiographical texts is precisely how historically contingent such embodied relations are, how different practices are often necessary in order to read the traces of embodiment in particular texts, and how unpredictable the effects of such readings might be. While I would happily draw a new, improved map of Canada that would include all the bodies not yet drawn on the Canadian map here, my readings of these texts necessarily move in a different direction. As I underlined in the introductory chapter, my point is not to show how we can simply construct new identities endlessly, thus fitting narratives of embodiment into a preconceived mould, no matter how revolutionary such identities might seem. No single person can redraw a map, or rewrite embodied relations, in ways that would somehow make Canada, finally, into the inclusive nation it sometimes aspires to be. Moreover, there is no way to predict from my readings precisely which laws should be drawn, which practices abolished or altered, which institutions reshaped in order to arrive at a more inclusive nation. We cannot come up with these answers in advance. As Jonathan Dollimore underlines in his introduction to *Political Shakespeare*, "Nothing can be intrinsically or essentially subversive in the sense that prior to the event subversiveness can be more than potential; in other words it cannot be guaranteed a priori, independent of articulation, context, and reception" (13). Instead, we can only try to work toward altering our current relationships in ways that will help us move toward a still unknown future. If we think we are already knowledgeable about one another and empathetic toward others who live in different bodies and have different bodily histories, we cannot begin to find ways to listen differently. What I have tried to do in this dissertation is to show some of the myriad ways in which dominant ideas about Canadian inclusiveness simply do not reflect some a priori truth about the lives and bodies of Canadians that they are supposed to reflect. By paying attention to the messiness of embodied experiences, perhaps we can begin to unlearn what we think is true about living together as Canadians. So the first step in listening differently is simply to realize that there is more to hear than what we think we have already heard. In Hoy's terms, we must show the lie in the supposed conversation of Canada. Much of the work of this dissertation, then, involves realizing that we do not know one another the way we sometimes imagine that we do. Only then can we begin to imagine a different kind of future, one that does not simply unfold from, and perpetuate, the inequities of the present.

In common parlance, "really listening" might simply entail close attention to the words of another human being, as a psychologist or friend or sympathetic bartender might do. While this kind of listening is important, it is not enough. In order to listen differently, we need to think about the ways in which any particular textual moment is embedded in a complex history of social relations. For example, in the list of close listeners given above, why might bartenders be included? What history of social relations does this inclusion point toward, and which histories might in the process be elided? How can we listen to the body's speech, listening for the ways in which coherent narratives of nation, class, or gender become unravelled? The more we know about the social relations that precede particular embodied encounters, the better we can begin to untangle the present embodied relation or textual moment, to see the ways in which its emphases or digressions or elisions are embedded in a larger history of such moments or encounters. In other words, listening differently entails a historical kind of listening, where each moment or embodied encounter is read in the context of previous encounters which both help and hinder the current exchange. In this dissertation, I have found that postcolonial, feminist, and materialist theories and methodologies have helped me to read the traces of embodiment in three autobiographical texts in ways that take into account such histories. At the same time, the bodies I have traced here are partly the product of my own embodied encounter with these texts. The different kind of listening that this dissertation moves toward leaves open the possibility of other readings, other bodily encounters that would exceed the bounds of my own theorizing here. In other words, my own readings do not somehow master the bodies represented in these texts.

Instead, part of my aim here is to show some of the places where such presumptions of mastery or knowledge fail, where bodies exceed the discourses that write them.

This historical kind of listening, a serious way of paying attention to embodiment in autobiographical constructions of identity, in daily interactions, and in a wide range of social structures and institutions, has the potential to transform the way many scholars do their work in classroom settings, on committees, at conferences, on editorial boards, or in scholarly writings. Some of this work might be closely related in form to the project I have completed here. For example, one project might be to investigate how traces of embodiment potentially contest our understandings of earlier autobiographies by Canadian women such as Susanna Moodie, Catherine Parr Traill, Nellie McClung, Laura Goodman Salverson, Alice A. Chown, Dorothy Livesay, and other nineteenth and early-twentieth century autobiographers. In his introduction to Laura Goodman Salverson's *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, for example, K.P. Stich sees Salverson as "sufficiently representative of the sociology and psychology of immigration for her autobiography to serve as a psycho-history of nation-building in the multi-ethnic west" (xiii). He reads her autobiography as one that focuses on "inner truth" rather than "historicity," diminishing her text in traditionally gendered terms by claiming it presents a "child-like perspective" (xiv-xv). Stich both generalizes and personalizes Salverson's *Confessions*, making it merely personal and broadly general at once. An analysis of embodiment here might connect private lives with public discourses more clearly, potentially contesting broad understandings of the ways in which all immigrants supposedly fit into a growing Canadian nation in the early twentieth century. Another project might be to compare some of these earlier texts with later Canadian women's autobiographies such as Lee Maracle's *I Am Woman*, Margaret Laurence's *Dance on the Earth*, Minnie Aodla Freeman's *Life Among the Qallunaat*, Gabrielle Roy's *Enchantment and Sorrow*, Janet Silman's *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out*, or Elly Danica's *Don't: A*

Woman's Word, to name just a few examples. By reading older texts together with more recent ones, scholars might be able to trace more specifically the ways in which what Raymond Williams has called "residual" elements of culture continue into contemporary texts, or the ways in which older texts sometimes contain liberatory possibilities that may have been lost along the way (122). This comparison might trace a more complex, embodied history than one which merely assumes the continual progress of the nation, the supposedly ever-forward movement toward national inclusiveness. Thus Salverson might be read in conjunction with Maracle's *I Am Woman*, or Chown's *The Stairway* against Danica's *Don't*, or Freeman's *Life* against Moodie's *Roughing It*. The point of this comparative work would not be to discover a pre-existing tradition of Canadian women's autobiographies, for such canons are often constructed in ways that simply underwrite conservative nation-building projects. Likewise, the point would not be to see how these women are all similar as women after all, sharing bodily experiences that are somehow independent of history or of the particular material circumstances which frame their lives. Instead, this kind of work could trace embodied moments of connection and divergence, listening for the messiness of embodied experiences which have the potential to contest dominant discourses of nation at particular historical moments.

Such readings could also be brought into the classroom, in Canadian literature courses, in autobiography courses, in introductory survey courses, or in other contexts, in ways that would potentially disrupt dominant discourses of national inclusiveness by challenging overly neat ways of fitting particular autobiographical texts into nation-building canons or into inclusive national narratives. Listening differently begins with realizing how the careful listening "we" thought "we" were doing as Canadians has not always occurred. Indeed, the inclusiveness promised in dominant discourses is even impeded, at times, by the very discourses that purport to promote national inclusiveness. Beginning to dismantle dominant ways of understanding how Canadians find a place in nation provides a crucial step, then, toward clearing a space for new ways of constructing national institutions, interacting with one another in daily ways, and imagining the local and global communities we live in. Some texts that might be useful for this kind of project include canonical autobiographies such as Frederick Philip Grove's *In Search of Myself* (where an entire bodily history, interestingly enough, has been constructed to erase the immigrant life of Felix Paul Greve), archival documents including unpublished women's diaries or letters, or autobiographical texts that are not yet, or may never be, archived, such as my Aunt Hazel's decades-long diary which progressively documents her farming life in Southern Alberta from the Second World War to the present. In the classroom, oral histories, student journals, or other writing projects could be examined in order to think through the ways in which teachers' and students' bodies are brought into, or left out of, dominant ways of reading autobiographical and other literary texts. These ways of reading, in turn, could begin to be revised through attempts to incorporate more bodily understandings of our encounter with texts and with each other in the classroom and in other academic settings. To what extent does it matter when and where a particular autobiographical text is read, the position of the body when reading, or the kind of body reading the text? Which bodies are legitimated in the classroom in readings of particular texts, and why? Is the classroom sometimes mistaken for a kind of microcosm of nation in Canadian literature or introductory survey courses, with certain student bodies seen as representative of particular ethnic or gender positions? Or more broadly, in what ways do CVs or job interviews or departmental meetings construct notions of selfhood that elide particular bodily experiences? My brief reading of the multiculturalism conference above, for example, could form the beginnings of a similar kind of project, where bodies could be read through examining informal discussions at lunch tables, or oral histories could be used to investigate the ways in which the bodies included within the conference are connected with each other and with the bodies of those outside conference walls.

These and other questions might help us to think through the ways in which various modes of embodiment in the classroom and in other academic settings both contest and reinforce national discourses and other discourses of inclusiveness that inform our readings of autobiographical texts.

One of the most important things this study has underlined for me is how very difficult it can be to change the dominant structures of society. In order to bring about progressive change, it is important first to see that something must change. While this may seem an obvious point, dominant discourses and institutions often work to "cover their tracks," so to speak, so that it can become quite difficult either to see what is wrong or to imagine other ways of being. *The Concubine's Children* might easily be read as a triumphant multicultural narrative, for example, if we do not learn to read the way bodies are displaced, ignored, or disrupted in the text. Although it may be painfully evident to some people that Canada is not as inclusive as it might seem, there are numerous ways that dominant discourses work to gloss over such inequities, sometimes even for those most painfully affected by them. Many of us learn to discount embodied experience as untrustworthy; we learn not to trust the feeling that things are not as they should be; or we may begin to believe that current ways of being are inevitable and unchangeable. But as Dollimore underlines, dominant discourses, institutions, and social relations are far from static. Because bodies have the potential radically to contest the social codes that write them, listening differently for the spaces of embodiment in various autobiographies would require nothing less than a revolution in the ways we read texts, interact in bodily ways with one another, and imagine ourselves as individuals, as communities, and as nations.

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